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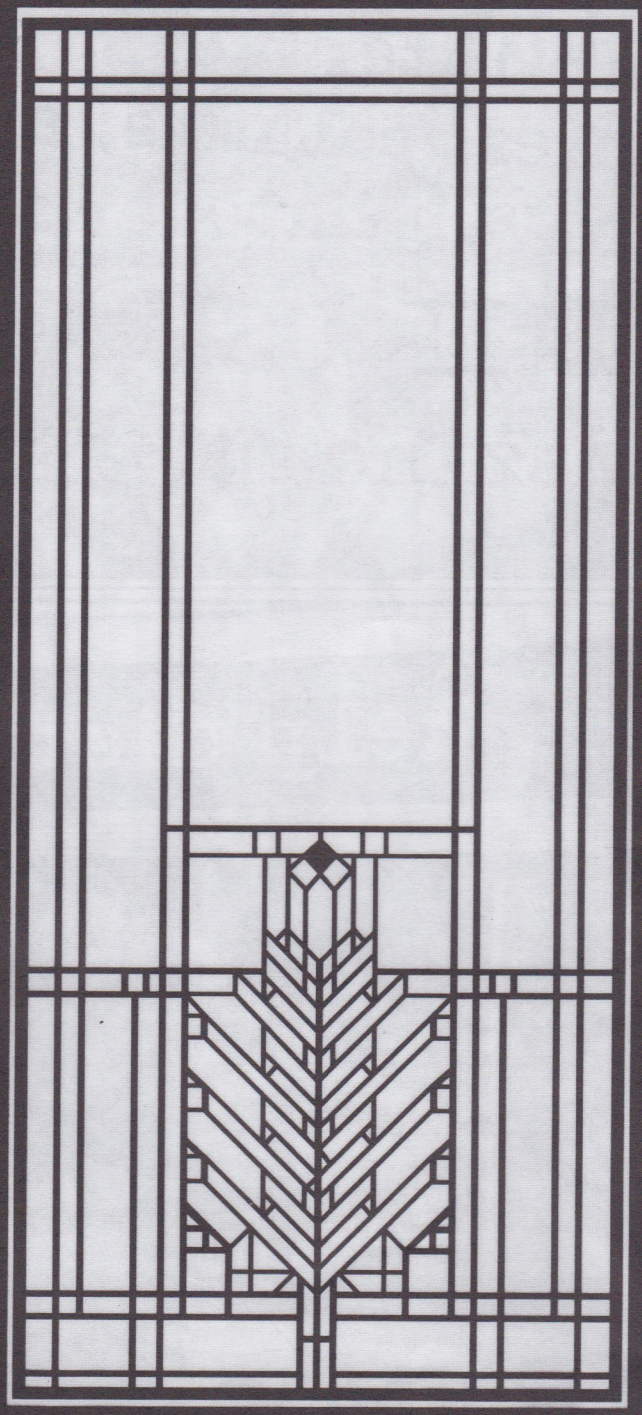

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ray and jim, 2005.

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AUSMUTEANTS and LUMPY & THE DUMPERS

AUSMUTEANTS

Ausmuteants are one of those bands, in a long line of bands... their influences are blaringly obvious—Devo, the Ramones, Wire—but not obsolete. It's punk music. Short, fast, and melodic songs—and Ausmuteants do it so well. The writing is great. It's straightforward and catchy. They are also incredibly prolific and hardworking people. It seems like they are constantly putting out a new record—lucky for us they gave us a couple of songs for this issue even. Interview by Ray, photo provided by Ausmuteants, intro by Jim.

Who is Felix? Did he really try to kill himself?
Jake: I was on a Euro tour with Frowning Clouds in 2012, I spent at least six hours a day shitting (every type of shit you can think of), two hours a day puking for the better part of six weeks. I definitely felt like offing myself. On the plane home I was watching The Odd Couple. Felix is Jack Lemons character, and at the start of the movie a bunch of his friends are playing poker together and find out his girlfriend has dumped him. They're scared he is going to commit suicide at their house, so they go to ridiculous lengths to prevent it. Also, I remember from watching a Steven Segal movie as a kid, that he could kill a man 11 different ways with a toothbrush, something that stuck with me. Also my mum always points out that Steven Segal walks like he has a stick up his bum.

Jake: I just steal 'em from a whole bunch of other stuff. The Simpsons, a book, another song, think of a funny title and make shit rhyme.

Having three singers, do you ever get into fights over who's songs get played and when in the set?
Billy: Nah not at all, I prefer to only sing one a set.
Shaun: Nah, cause all of our songs are pearlers, no matter who wrote them. Quadruple-threat.
Jake: I want them to sing more. Or I want to play synth and guitar less and just rock da mic. All four of us sing at least one song. We usually get in fights over cooler stuff... politics, eco-system, Nasdac, who started punk, do you have butter with a peanut butter... etc.

AUSMUTEANTS

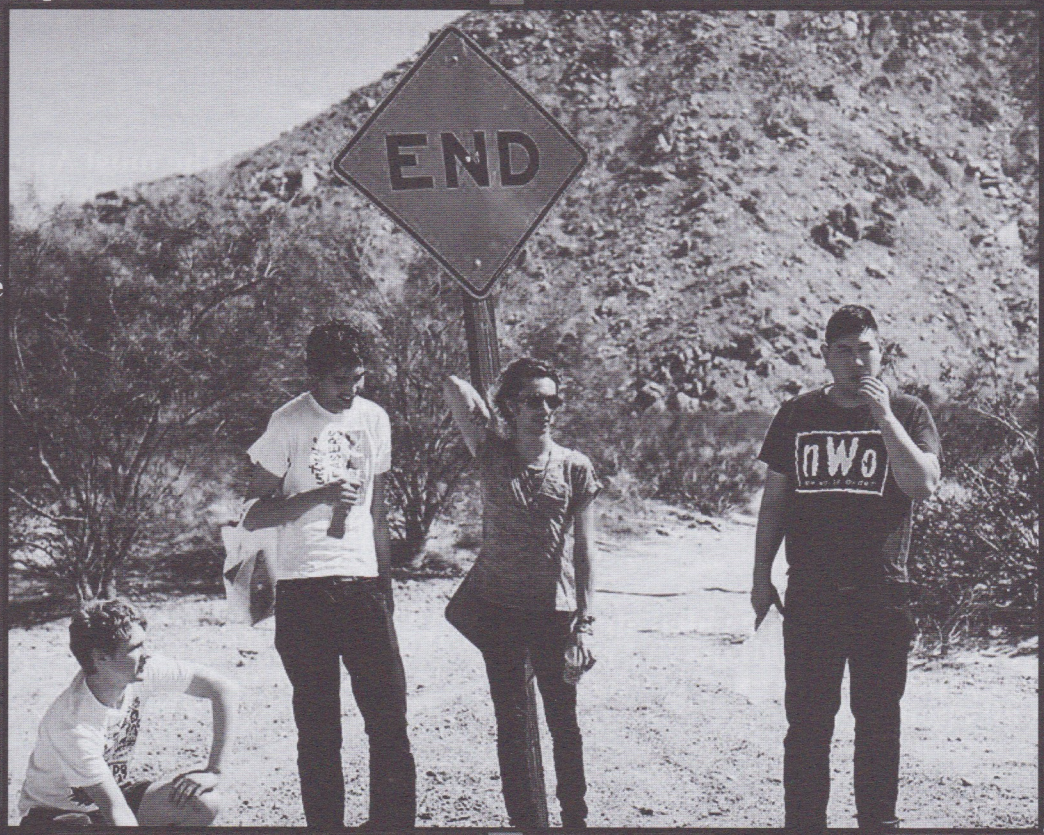
Have any of you actually been kicked in the head by a horse?
Jake: Nah, this dude from Geelong did. He was an oddball who used to claim to have two dicks. He used to be best mates with our pal Dylan (who's dad has to hide orange juice from him because he will skull the whole two litre in one sitting, who tried to have a wank in the same room as me and Billy, who wipes up piss with his knee) but something went down and Dylan head-butted him, probably in the same spot he got kicked by the horse. One girl came up to me when we were playing in LA (I think) and was like "I got kicked in the head by a horse, and I didn't find it funny!" I guess it is only funny if you have two dicks and are best friends with a guy who knee-mops piss.

Where the fuck do your lyrics come from? Cause sometimes they're cleverly dumb and sometimes political/social. Are you trying to get anything in particular across?
Billy: There's usually a funny story behind all of 'em. Jake's a wise-ass when it comes to lyrics.

You toured the States for the first time recently. Had any of you been here before? What were your thoughts on us as a country?
Jake: It's hard to sum this up in a sentence because every state is like a different country. My favourite places were St Louis, Chicago, New Orleans, Austin and Memphis. The food was next level. Also—a big fan of Walmart. What a place. Favourite fast food was probably In & Out. I really liked Taco Bell, but everybody else hated it—I think the key is choosing a burrito over a taco, rookie mistake. Favourite activity was shooting guns on my birthday with our pal Meghan.
Shaun: I've visited to see family in Phoenix before, but all the places we went to on tour were brand new to me. America is huge and it feels like huge cultural shifts happen once you cross a couple of state lines, so it's hard to say what I thought of the country as a whole. General impressions:
The South—Stocky farmhand physiques and the best food.

AUSMUTEANTS

Midwest—Everything I have heard is true—double denim and friendly dudes. Italian Beef is the best sandwich of all time.
East Coast—I liked Philadelphia the most. I was glad we went to MIT for a radio interview—much love to being a hacker in the '80s and Richard Stallman. You were right about everything, rms.
Pacific Northeast—Wasn't expecting the sleazy undercurrent in Portland. Was disappointed when the strip club featured athletic dance routines rather than anything designed to give you a boner. Still regret not getting a lap dance from the girl who danced to Aqua in a tutu.
West Coast—the landscape of Los Angeles is pretty fascinating, it feels like that city wasn't even designed to have people living there. Herzog likes California because he feels it's the place in America with the least European influence, but he probably just likes art deco and spare landscapes punctuated with a few palm trees because it's an emblem of civilization's triumph over the savage violence of nature.



How about the punk scene here? I know you guys had a blast in the Midwest...
Billy: Midwest is best. I was stoked with how many good bands we saw all over the country.
Shaun: We definitely played with some real good bands. Hardcore seems to be thriving there. I couldn't get over how goofy all the punx were. Nickelodeon punx. A vibe I am very into.
Jake: It's incredible. Sure there's some duds, but there is good bands everywhere! My favourite bands I saw were Big Zit, Lumpy and The Dumpers, Real Numbers, Giorgio Murderer... urgh I'm gonna stop—I saw loads of good bands. Not many bad ones at all.

What is the worst part of Haight and Ashbury?
Billy: Amoeba. Way overrated. Haight St. wasn't so bad; I had a delicious burrito there.
Jake: Being asked for money by a guy texting on an iPhone. The Amoeba (it sucks) the overpriced produce store, the shitty burrito I had, the constant pester of drug dealers, the plastic people, hacky sack, the Jerry Garcia worship, the "vibes.. y'know man—I just felt kinda bummed that I'm a Libra and you're an Aquarius."
Shaun: Jake was the worst I've ever seen him on Haight street. He was walking around with his fists clenched, crazy eyes darting around everywhere, ready to punch a hippie. The burritos we got weren't even that good.

You guys have gotten a lot of shit for some arguably homophobic things—well, mostly your use of the word faggot. There was the art on the Stale White Boys... 7" and some comments in your MRR interview. Would you care to address any of this?

Jake: Probably sparked from my obsession with Fear and Spider Babies when I was younger, and my love of '70s Australian movies where every insult has the word "Poofter" in it. That MRR review was utter garbage. Not one mention of the actual songs—it's all just, "Fuck these guys, they replaced Fender with faggot." Bitch should stick to dumpster diving and stealing her parent's money. As for the actual homophobic content in Ausmuteants, it is all a huge joke. A lot of our friends are gay. The guy who did our first 7"cover is gay. A lot of my influences are gay. A lot of my idols are gay. I used to find it funny trying to take on another persona of "The douchebag" (trying to do an Andy Kaufman I guess) writing homophobic, racist or sexist things as a joke. Then I realised I just sound like an idiot, and even if the song has funny words, I'm still acting like a fuckhead. So I try not to do that anymore.
Shaun: Not my lyrics *shrug*

Also, I think the record name Stale White Boys Playing Stale Black Music is genius.

Where did that title come from?
Jake: A lot of these shitty garage, psyche, whatever bands who have the blues influence. I guess it has been happening since the '50s with Bill 'Left Eye'Haley and his Cum-its. The way I see it is blues starts, you get some crazy Blind Blake/Charlie Patton/Leadbelly...etc—like insane people playing insane music. White boys hear about it—some do it good (early Rolling Stones, Kinks), some do it bad (Derek Clapton / Stevie Ray Vaughn) then these original artists (BB King) come back and play some watered down garbage music that the white boys go crazy for. Zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz—so now, blues has been so overdone that all the people that play it can do is 12 bar chords and pentatonic scales in between replacing their catheter.

You put out six releases last year. When I saw you on tour you were already playing new songs. How the hell do you guys do it?!
Billy: Jake writes a shitload of songs. We jammed a lot last year also.
Jake: Not sure. We all have full time jobs and try to practice once a fortnight. When we record we just try and belt out 25 songs. So I guess that's how we did it. Not putting any creativity or effort into song writing and arranging helps with speed.
Shaun: I guess all of us write songs individually, demo them and bring them to band practice. You can get a lot done when practice just consists of learning new songs that are pretty much ready to go.

Help me out here. I saw a youtube video about Sharpies. You're the only Australians I've ever met, so could you explain to me exactly what the fuck that is all about?
Jake: These were just sharply dressed lads who liked to have a little bit of argy bargy now and then. I have many holes in my knowledge. I guess if you're interested you can start out with Coloured Balls or La Femme?
Shaun: Kind of similar to '69 skinheads maybe? The soundtrack to being a sharpie would have been excellent, but I'm judging this basically just off the Coloured Balls LP. There's a weird little revival with this sharpie stuff, I've seen a lot of mullets and tight-fitting '70s polo t-shirts at punk shows, and a lot of people are listening to glam. The dudes from Power kinda rock this look. If you think about it Sharpies are actually kinda like lads, who are sketchy dudes wearing Nautica and bum-bags who rob you while using pig latin (literally) and throwing up some sick tags.

Also, the 50 Year Storm that they talk about in Point Break... is that real?
Jake: Yeah, Billy's dad catches waves in Bells Beach. He's 50. You work it out.

On this last tour, when did you feel the most Australian? Just so completely out of your element?
Jake: Probably having to tip for service. In Australia, people in hospitality jobs get $20 an hour so there's no need to tip. Also, calling coriander "cilantro." Silly
Shaun: After we played in Chicago, this real muscular dude came up to me like,
"Man, I was feelin' that song you were playing bro! Like, I wanna fuck some dude's girlfriend while they watch dude! I just wanna fuck someone's girlfriend while they watch!" I told him to go to Craigslist and see if anyone with a thing for being cuckolded was looking for anyone to smut out their wife to while they sat around being emasculated, revelling in the heady mix of utter humiliation and voyeuristic thrills. He really had a great physique. I told him he would make a great bull, and he went on his way.

When did you feel the most American? Like, "This is it—this is America!"
Billy: Fast food. And the first time we went to 7-11 in LA. Jake and I ran around like kids in a candy store. Also the legal guns... that felt strange wherever we went.
Jake: Chowing down burger after burger and shooting magnum .44s.
Shaun: Definitely when we visited a firing range in Seattle, then went and got legal weed—"Grape Stomper." I listen to UGK, or whatever, so I was real happy when I could roll the weed up in a Swisher, but I'm aware that this is pathetic. Jake asked for "libido boosters" at a Walgreens cause he was losing his mind after several weeks of no sex with his girlfriend. The dude he asked was a goth and an expert on pills of this nature. He recommended we try and find one called "Stiff Nights." He told us to be careful though. I looked it up and Stiff Nights had been banned that month because it was found to be an untested Viagra analogue. We did some pretty cool stuff in Seattle actually. I went and jerked it in a porn arcade, and the dude manning the counter was wearing a Metallica t-shirt. Pretty sure I picked up Ride the Lightning earlier that day! Whenever I played arcade games I had to adjust to the Happ hardware you guys have up there. This meant I had to play Third Strike at about 60%, but I still got some wins even though I don't even play that game suckers. Sanwa forever.
People are always throwing comparisons to you guys that are sometimes obvious: Devo, Screamers... Really, any punk with keys. What are the actual influences of Ausmuteants?
Jake: Devo are a huge influence and I think it shows. I don't think we sound anything like the screamers though. We all listen to different stuff. Trying to find some link between Euro disco and American hardcore and Australian garage punk is what I try to do.
Billy: Definitely Devo but lately, all the bands we

AUSMUTEANTS

saw in America.
Shaun: A lot of nu-metal. A lot of Regurgitator: probably one of the best Australian bands ever. They've never had a U.S release, but down here they would consistently make the top-ten in their hey-day. I genuinely think Ausmuteants sounds more like Regurgitator than the Screamers or whatever. I remember reading a young adult novel where a character relished the opportunity to blast his Regurgitator CDs when his parents left the house. Same character also jerked it to classical music. My first girlfriend tried to have sex to Bocelli's Romanza and I couldn't stop laughing. She was mad for the rest of the night.

What exactly is an Ausmuteant? Am I one? Can I become one?
Jake: Brazilian mushroom that was once strong in the '60s and now has grown stale.

Who's cuter: Lumpy or the Dumpers?
Jake: How can Martin compete with John and Gabe, the cutesy wootsy, glitter twins? Their slime is silver and sparkly.
Billy: John Birkner.
Shaun: The most handsome member of this band is without question, John Birkner.

You guys talk a lot of shit about where you live in your songs. Is there anything cool there?
Jake: Yeah, Australia rules. Some of the people here suck. Most of those songs have taken the "think of shit / make it rhyme" approach. Laziness on my behalf.

What's the punk scene like?
Jake: It's great! It goes in waves, but it's good! I went to a show last night which was UV Race, Orion, Constant Mongrel and Housewives. A few other bands too... But that line up exclaims how good Australia can be for music.

Australian slang has always been really interesting to me. I love the way it sounds, and usually I can't make any sense where it's derived from. You wanna give us some of your personal favorite Aussie-isms? Any American slang you were struck by when you were over here?
Billy: In Seattle our friend Meghan told us you guys call doing a U-turn "flipping a bitch." That's crazy! Our friends in St. Louis thought that us referring to having sex as "getting a root" was hilarious. We traded heaps of AUS/USA slang that night. An Aussie favorite of mine is judging how far away somewhere is by how many beers you could drink on the walk, e.g. "the supermarket's only two beers that way."
Jake: "Gotta point Percy at the porcelain" (have a piss). "She'll be apples" (everything will work out fine). "No sweat" (no worries). "Up ya bum" (get fucked). "Ridgey didge" (fair dinkum) [Now I'm twice confused/intrigued!—Ray] "Hooroo" (bye bye).
Shaun: Lad Slang: Lass (female lad). Eshay (yes) Adlay (lad). Red hot (related to a crime/desirable). Gronk (an idiot). Chat (generally bad)—refers to a suburb in Sydney called Chatswood, Shards (crystal meth).

What is the absolute worst part about being in a band?
Jake: Relatives saying, "Seems like you're going somewhere," after a self-funded overseas tour or getting played on a radio station. But if you're like "We played at the Tote front bar with some mates," it is responded with, "How much?" and "Why?"
Shaun: All the time spent practicing that could be used for like, Street Fighter, or cooking, sleeping, you know.

What are the future plans for Ausmuteants?
Shaun: I can't wait to move all the Deore-Xt running gear from my touring bike with a totaled frame onto something really nice. Maybe even get a Dawes Galaxy or something, go off on some sweet adventures. There's a F.W Evans touring frame on Ebay that's been up for a couple of months, maybe if it's still there in a few months I can low-ball the seller.
Jake: Stay regular.

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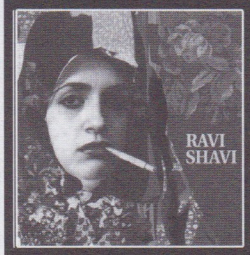

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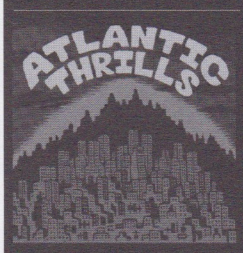

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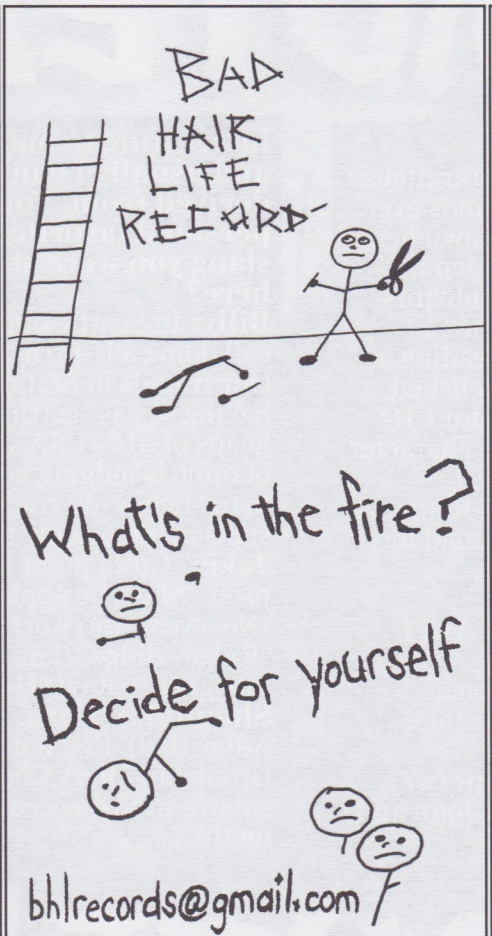

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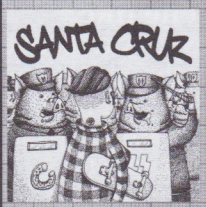

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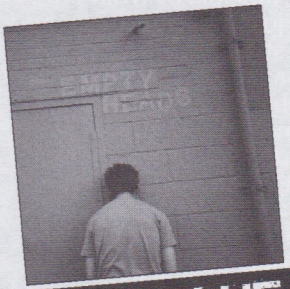

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If you haven't heard The Best Show with Tom Scharpling before, I feel bad for you. Luckily it's something easily remedied. Go over to thebestshow.net right away. If you haveFrom it's inception until December 2013 the show was a weekly music/comedy/call-in live show on New Jersey's legendary free-form, independent radio station, WFMU. After 13 years of doing the show for free, Tom made the decision to take it off the radio, get some sponsors, and make it an internet show – still live, every Tuesday night.

Trying to describe The Best Show with Tom Scharpling to someone who's never heard it is an incredibly difficult thing to do. The format is plain enough -a call-in style radio show with music segments. Scharpling comes to the table with a few topics, opens the lines, and people call in. And that's where things get crazy. Touting itself as "three hours of Mirth, Music, and Mayhem," Scharpling, along with with his comedy writing partner Jon Wurster (of Superchunk/Mountain Goats/Bob Mould band drumming notoriety), holds court over one of the most consistently entertaining programs currently going on right now. Beyond coming up with hilarious call-in topics, and being one of the quickest wits in live comedy, the world that Tom Scharpling and Jon Wurster have created for the program – the fictitious town of Newbridge, New Jersey – is one of the most ridiculously intricate mythological universes ever made. Think Middle Earth, if it was filled with Wa-Wa's, fans of the late Kevin Allin, and a cavalcade of characters filled with a little too much unearned self assurance bordering on hubris. Interspersed with the public calls are scripted bits featuring Wurster as one of the citizens of this comically insane universe. The duo have really lifted the classic two-man comedy team to new and hilarious levels. Coming out of a punk/indie-rock background it's as if their comedy is the comedy of the 2000 Year-Old Black Flag Fan.

You can listen to the show live every Tuesday night at thebestshow.net, or download it as podcast. There is also a fan community message board at friendsoftom.com. We did this interview via Skype, an hour later than we had originally scheduled due to completely inability to get any right the first time when it comes to technology. Tom was patient, and kind, enough to wait out the technical problems and still do the interview. I also had the feeling that if I was talking to him on his show, as opposed to him talking to me for this zine, I would have been Bad Companyed, if not outright GOMP'd. Which I would have taken as a compliment. Intro and interview by Ray Martinez. Illustrations by Shaina Perry.

Tom Scharpling

Ray: First, thanks for doing this. I appreciate you taking even more time out of your day to do this.

Tom: Let's make magic happen.

Ray: I really appreciate you doing an interview for a fanzine.

Tom: Of course.

Ray: You used to do a fanzine, that was also a record label, and you do the radio show... It's a lot of behind-the-scenes, doing a lot of stuff that people aren't seeing. What drew you to do that, as opposed to being on a stage or in front of a camera?

Tom: I've always kind of been more interested in stuff that is behind-the-scenes, and I've never really had the compulsion to do stuff in front of people, like really be on stage. That was never any kind of calling. I never felt the attraction of that. I always liked writing and just making things but not having to make me be the thing, or kind of the presenter of the thing.

Ray: With *The Best Show* you're definitely the main focus of, like, 90% of the show. It's interesting because you're still kind of the thing, but not being the thing...

Tom: Yeah, but that's radio. Maybe that's the appeal of radio—you can be in a room all by yourself, but you're still performing for a whole lot of people. So it's kind of a funny, kind of ironic, thing there that I'm performing for more people than I ever could if I was interested in doing things in front of people—but I'm in a room, by myself.

Ray: Another behind-the-scenes thing you did for a long time was working on *Monk*. I've always been curious about it because you never really talked about that on *The Best Show*.

Tom: Yeah.

Ray: How did that come about—working on that program at all?

Tom: My day job, or what I hope my day job is, is writing and making stuff in terms of TV shows, or movies, or whatever. So I had been trying to get a job in TV and ended up working with Andy Breckman. I ended up getting to know him through WFMU—he has a show on WFMU also. We became friends and started working as his assistant. He was a guy who had written a bunch of movies, and had written for *Letterman* and *Saturday Night Live*. So I ended up working as his assistant while he would be writing a movie and that was kind of my audition for *Monk*, which he had created but hadn't started yet.

Ray: So you worked for him as an assistant, not at the radio station?

Tom: As an assistant for him while he was doing screenwriting.

Ray: The only times I could ever recall *Monk* being brought up on the show would often be when a caller would bring it up, and you would *immediately* dump the call. Was there a conscious effort to keep your worlds separate?

Tom: Yeah. First of all, there's the non-commercial radio restriction that you're not supposed to promote your stuff. But it's also just not interesting to me, to have this radio show and just be talking about a job—like a TV show job—would be boring. And it's also my job, and I don't really want to be talking about it all the time either, cause that's boring too—to work all day and then go do this radio show that could be anything I want it to be, but I'm talking about this job, is… that's not fun.

Ray: That makes sense. Is there a separation between *Best Show* Tom and everyday day-job Tom?

Tom: Not really. I mean, I'm sure it's a little more heightened on the radio, a little more abrasive, but it's still me. It's still just a part of me.

Ray: Right. Because at times it seems to be maybe a persona that has a little bit of shock jock-ish, wrestling heel thing. Not in a negative way, but in a kind of acerbic, you're ok with people not liking you type thing.

Tom: Oh, I don't care. I don't think I'm doing anything particularly bad.

Ray: Neither do I.

Tom: If I don't like something it's not like I'm being actually mean to people. I'll tease people and I will not like what they like, but I'm not hurting people. I'm not going out of my way to make them feel bad.

Ray: It just reminds me of bad guy wrestlers. You know, people *love* them…

Tom: Sure.

Ray: But there's a little bit of showmanship there.

Tom: Yeah. I'm sure there's some of that. It's like if you're talking, and you're trying to get people to listen there's some level of whatever you want to call it—if it's performance, or showmanship, or whatever—that you have to do if people are going to listen. So I'm sure thats' a part of it.

Ray: So I'm sure that *The Best Show* wasn't the first radio show that you did. Where there things beforehand that lead into *The Best Show*?

Tom: I had done radio on WFMU that was more music based, not the show that it is now. It was more music based and was the start of me doing radio. I didn't really do any before that.

Ray: How was the transition from that, because there's still music with *The Best Show*. How did it go from being more music based radio show to a comedy slash talk, with music, radio show?

Tom: Well, you do the show, and when you start it's music based, and then you get more comfortable talking and do more of that. And then doing the stuff with Jon Wurster, that expands everything right out too. So there's more comedy through that. It's just a bunch of different factors adding up. There's a lot more to talk about, and the show shifts.

Ray: So Jon Wurster was there from the very beginning?

Tom: When I was doing the music show on WFMU, I started that by myself. A couple years later we did a couple calls. When the show started back up again in 2000 as *The Best Show* then Jon was there every week.

Ray: Something I've always wondered about is the collaborative writing process between the two of you. Because he's in bands, always on the road, and you're doing the radio show every Tuesday. So you're pretty locked into New Jersey, for the most part. How do you guys go about writing, with your schedules being what they are?

Tom: We write in any way we can, is how we do it. We'll write on the phone, we'll write on instant message, we'll email each other stuff, we'll write separately and send the things to each other… Every version of writing you can do, we've done.

Ray: So there are calls that you do that you know the text, but you haven't performed with each other at all?

Tom: Oh no, we don't rehearse the stuff at all, no. We've done it enough that we're doing it live.

Ray: With the characters, and the whole mythology of Newbridge, you guys are both coming up with characters? I've been intrigued by that as well, that you're obviously playing the straight man, but are you only writing parts for yourself? Do you also come up with characters also for Jon to do?

Tom: We kinda write whatever has to… It's like, however it gets written, it gets written. Jon will come up with stuff for me to say, I'll write stuff for Jon to say. We've been all over the map with that.

Ray: In that case, what are some of your favorite characters, or moments, that Jon came up with? Ones that were thrown at you and you thought, "Oh my god, this is amazing. This is it."

Tom: Huh! I mean, the big one would be Philly Boy Roy. Jon grew up down outside of Philly, so that's kind of his childhood, so he kinda knew guys like that. So he brought Roy to the table, and that's the big one off the top of my head.

Ray: What about the characters that you've come up with that you're pretty proud of? The one's where he's doing the character and you're like, "Yeah!"

Tom: You know, it's funny, I swear to you that I couldn't think of… We work together so deeply on these things that I don't even see where they start. We just both build these things out. I've worked with him for about 20 years now, so we have this relationship that's just this other thing. So it just goes so much deeper than someone bringing a thing to the other one. It's like, someone will say one sentence and then we instantly start building it out and it just goes up from there.

Ray: So are the calls 100% scripted? Or is there some level of improvisation that goes into it at all?

Tom: We like to keep them loose and exciting, but on the whole they're scripted. We're not winging it with that stuff. We know where were going with it and where things have to be said for the concepts to work. So it's pretty tight, but we also know where we can have fun with it too.

Ray: That makes so much sense. When I first started listening to the show I completely thought they were improvised calls. It took me a while to realize that these different characters were the same person, and piecing it all together made it so much more impressive that it was all written out and came off so casually. Kudos to you guys for the great writing and great performance when it comes to that.

Tom: Well, thank you. I think that when it comes to that the level of comfort—the same thing talking about the way the writing works where I kind of can't think about where things begin or end—where we just have this comfort performing that I guess it could sound kind of improvised. We're just comfortable doing it.

Ray: There seems to be a really large connection between *The Best Show* and the more underground music community. You have a background in indie rock, putting out records, and Jon, obviously, is touring and in bands with Bob Mould. What do you think is the attraction between the two? Because, it's obvious that when you make a reference to someone like G.G. Allin that it's going to bring in a group of people, and I'm sure there's a group of people who are fans of the *The Best Show* who have no knowledge of any of that but still are drawn. I was wondering where that comes from.

Tom: Those are just the things that we think are funny. Stuff like that is… I've always been interested in music. The two things I've always been interested in would be music and comedy—my whole life. It's the same way with Jon. He ended up doing more music as kinda the thing that he does, whatever you want to call it, whether it's his day-job or however you want to refer to him being in different bands. I ended up choosing more of the comedy side of things, but we kind of meet in the middle on these things and we both get to combine the things we're interested in. Anytime there's a reference, and if anyone doesn't get them, I think that they just know that there's something funny there that they can kind of roll with even if they're not 100% up to speed. They can hang with the idea that, "Ok, may I'll figure out what that was later." It's the kind of thing like how I've liked different comedy things where I didn't always get the references, but you get the spirit of it and you know what's funny there so you can hang with it. I think we're doing some kind of version of that.

Ray: I definitely agree with that. *The Best Show* reminds me of, not in the type of humor, but in the same way that with *Monty Python* the more you watch it the more you pick up on things. On you can revisit a lot of the calls that you and Jon do, and just the show in general, and pick up something that is referenced to later. It's like peeling an onion.

Tom: The *Monty Python* thing was always an influence on me, and I didn't always get those things. So you kind of just roll with it, cause you know something's funny there and that you'll catch up to where they are.

Ray: I also really like that *The Best Show* is a show that is about music *and* comedy, but there's not much musical comedy for the most part. You had that great episode where you had people call in and write a song and by the end of it Ted Leo and the Pharmacists recorded the song and it was played.

Tom: Yeah.

Ray: But besides that, I can't think of many other times where there's actual musical comedy. I've always found that really interesting that it's both at the same time, but not as the same thing.

Tom: We've done songs on show where characters have had songs that were funny, but on the whole, it's comedy about music but not funny songs—we don't really go the other way with it. Like song parodies and stuff just really didn't have a place on the show because there's just so much straight rock that I would want to get to that the whole show doesn't have to be a comedy fest. I did a radio show at WFMU before I did the comedy thing so I always looked at WFMU as a platform to play good music too.

Ray: You definitely have bands that I wouldn't have known about if you hadn't championed them in that classic rock DJ aspect of the first segment of the show being just music.

Tom: Honestly, I just play whatever I want to hear at that time. And just to set a kind of mood for the show and a mood for myself. I try not to have an agenda with it where it's the new music show or "write these things down" because that's what I'm here to do, turn you on to new stuff. But also, that is appealing. If I like a band and I can use the show as a platform so that people can hear them, it's like, yeah, I'll definitely do that. I love that. But it's not like it has to always be that.

Ray: A thing that I got into was how towards the end of the WFMU run you were starting to do these sound collages that I thought were *really* interesting and really weird, and you would just kind of intersperse them throughout the show. What was the draw to do that—and the placement of them? Was there any particular reason as to why you put the collages where you did?

Tom: Any reason why I would put what?

Ray: The collages interspersed throughout the show. Because otherwise it was music and then calls.

Tom: I don't know. There was something fun about doing them, so I started getting into doing them and doing more. It got kinda got expanded out and kept growing and people seemed to think that they were at least interesting, and I found them interesting, so it was just something that was crazy to drop into the middle of a show. I kinda just got deeper and deeper into it.

Ray: I think I heard in an interview, or read somewhere that the decision to stop doing the show on WFMU was not a rash one that you had decided about a year beforehand, and it seemed that in last year that you cut loose a lot more and did things like the sound collages. Was there just a kind of, "I know this is ending, so I'm gonna do whatever" type of mentality.

Tom: Umm… I don't know if it was that way. I'm sure there's some part of that in there. But to me it felt like I wanted to keep pushing the show and go to new places and see where we can end up. So that was one way we could try to push things. Because you have the open air like that—you might as well do something with it, rather than do the same thing over and over.

Ray: A thing that I enjoyed tremendously, but thought was weird because you do radio, was the video you guys made that was on Adult Swim—the infomercial. Was there any kind of hesitancy in trying to translate this world that, as you would often put it—was in the theatre of the mind—into a very visual type of thing?

Tom: I wasn't super concerned about that part of it, and I don't think Jon was super concerned—in that he was

reluctant to do it. I mean, we gotta try stuff, and that's a way to try stuff. We gotta see if we can track it and see if we can go to different places with what these characters are. I was excited to see them as they do their thing and have them be represented physically, rather than just being voices. And it also was just a chance to show Jon acting, cause Jon's really funny as a physical performer. So it was great to see him bring the characters to life in that regard also.

Ray: I can always imagine him sitting on the other end of a phone actually acting out what he was saying—not just sitting there. Gesticulations, and whatnot. And I know that at the same time you have Gary the Squirrel, which is an actual puppet and that you would use it even though you were on the radio.

Tom: Oh yeah. Yeah.

Ray: Why? [laughter]

Tom: Because it's just… To me it would feel stupid to do it without the puppet on. That would be even dumber. Not doing it with the puppet on would feel even more ridiculous.

Ray: Just cutting loose at that point? [laughter]

Tom: Yeah. I would not be into that. I need to just feel like… You know, he just becomes real then—fun.

Ray: So the shift for *The Best Show* is that it's now going to become a podcast?

Tom: Not really. It'll end up a podcast, like the way we did the WFMU show. This will be live on the internet, just like the way the show was with live phone calls and everything like that, and then it'll get turned into a podcast after that.

Ray: Ok, I was going to ask about the live callers, because it's what the show is, really.

Tom: Yeah. And that's why I wanted to keep that part of it alive—it's a really important part for me.

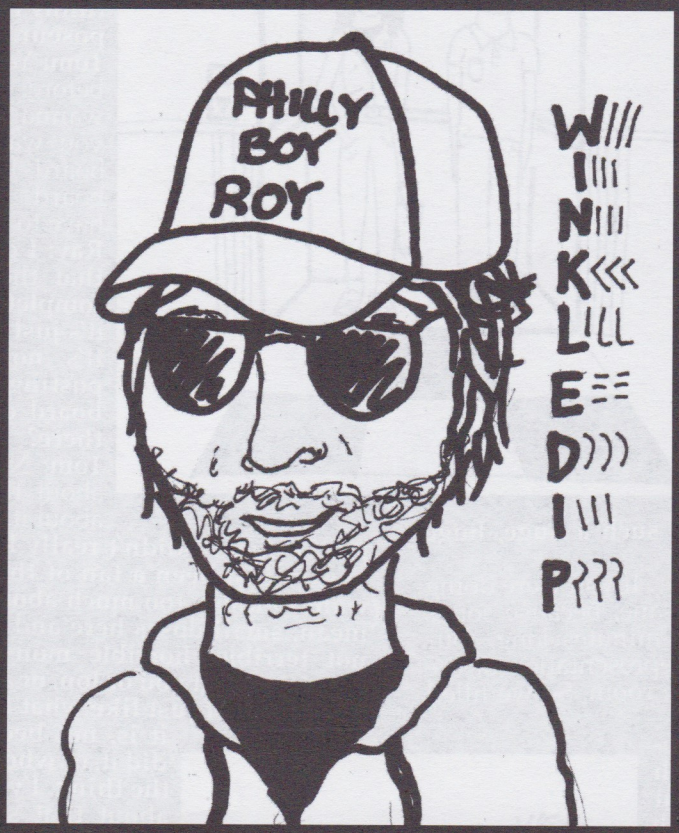
Ray: Are you still going to be able to play music? Streaming versus radio? I don't have any idea about any of that.

Tom: We will. We'll be above board with all that stuff in terms of paying and making sure we're paying people.

Ray: You've been very vocal, well honestly, "vocal" can have a connotation to it, about one of the reasons why you were leaving the non-commercial radio to do this was the amount of work you were doing without getting compensated for it monetarily.

Tom: Uh huh.

Ray: Because, I'm not thinking of it in terms like "selling out," but in doing something non-commercially for so long that… Was there any weird kind of ethical hang-ups that you had about doing that? Like any kind of nagging, "Well, I wanna get paid, but I don't know if I should…" What was the thought process in making that kind of giant transition?



Tom: It was just time. We did the show for a long time on WFMU. There really wasn't much of a tug-of-war like that because it had been 13 years. It was like, if we're going to move it we gotta move it now and see what else is out there.

Ray: So you guys didn't have the sitting around, "Are we selling out," conversation.

Tom: No! I wouldn't even know what that would mean at this point. I don't think we could have done a thing for more… We did a thing for free for 13 years. That carries over for a few lifetimes.

Ray: And that's actually kind of the next the question I have written down here. Coming from a kind of indie rock, zinester background do you think "selling out," in scare quotes, is even relevant anymore in this day and age where we can skype right now to have this conversation? People use Twitter…

Tom: You know, it doesn't mean what it used to mean at all. It used to be something else. It used to be a line you didn't cross, and maybe that line was way too restrictive, but now it's just different. There doesn't seem to be any version of… It's like selling out is not a thing at all. People will just do what they need to do, or what they want to do, and that's just kinda how it is. So everyone's just gotta follow their own code, I guess, rather than having other people policing them for it—which maybe the best way to be. Because then it's not like its some bully, or some group of bullies, forcing people to do things they don't want to do. It's like people need to find that line for themselves and stick to it.

Ray: I completely agree. A thing that drew me to the show, and that I've always admired in you as a person—because it translates as a host—is that you're very level about a lot things. Where you're very "do your own thing." You don't have to like what everybody else likes. And I always thought that that brought a good, like genuinely good, people and audience to your show and the calls. There doesn't seem to be any extreme people calling into *The Best Show*. For a talk show it's a very level-headed group of people. Is that something that you, perhaps, have tried to cultivate?

Tom: It's not that you… People just kind of find the show and get into the show, and to me it's just a big relief that everybody that's into the show seems to be pretty cool. It's nice that that's where the audience is at. I don't know if it's something you can willfully cultivate, an audience like that. It seems like that would be a huge mistake. I just wanted people to listen, and check the show out, and see what we're doing, and hopefully find stuff funny. Thankfully, a lot of nice people did that. But the show is not super mean, so it doesn't bring in a lot of aggressive

meanness from listeners. I think people understand the tone of the show, and it's a lot of like-minded people listening.

Ray: There is some level of snarkiness, though. You are known for doing some pretty eloquent takedowns of things that you're not a fan of, which I always find entertaining. It's good-natured but... What comes to mind is that Billy Crystal performance after Katrina, where you played his actual performance and interjected. Like some sort of running commentary. I was wondering if you have ever had any kind of encounters with various people, not necessarily Billy Crystal, but anyone you've given a little bit to? That have gotten back to you?

Tom: Not really. Not anything that's been direct like that, no. I'll stand by it if I say it, and if somebody called me on it I hope that I could make it clear that I'm just goofing around. But you can't like everything. And everybody has things they hate. So sometimes you're the thing that people hate. And it's that way for the radio show, I know that. There's people who don't like it and that's completely fine, because I don't like everything that everybody else does.

Ray: [laughter] That's a very fair approach at looking at the world. So you have a box set happening that's 16 CDs?

Tom: Yeah.

Ray: What made you want to do such a huge, huge undertaking like that?

Tom: The thing is the calls take up... If you were doing a 16 CD music thing that'd be insane, because songs are however long songs are—five minutes long, four minutes long. To get any sort of representation of the stuff that Jon and I did takes some room. So we filled out 16 CDs pretty fast.

Ray: Was a lot of the material pre-determined and then going through the archives you found more? What was the vetting process for which calls made the set?

Tom: It was really just going through and seeing what the best things were, what should make the cut. Just figuring that out. It was really just trying to put the best stuff out there. There was no other agenda than trying to make this the funniest thing possible.

Ray: So it's only material with you and Jon. Was there ever any desire to put some callers on there?

Tom: No. That stuff is out there enough. There's enough ways to hear that. This is meant to be something that really captures what Jon and I did, and just really goes deep with that.

Ray: You guys have released a few CDs beforehand, as well. Is there any kind of roll over of material? Are those CDs even still in print?

Tom: Those CDs are still in print. I think one of them isn't anymore, but they're still around. There's a few tracks from across those CDs because we wanted this box to be something that would be the one thing... If you needed to buy one thing, this box would sum the whole thing up for you.

Ray: I was talking to a friend that I met at a show, and I made some passing reference to *The Best Show*, some joke, and we immediately became friends. It was a little tribal language type thing. But I was actually referred to as a "*Best Show* poseur," because I don't frequent the board [laughter]. I was wondering was something I was missing out on completely but not being on the internet?

Tom: Nothing. You can't worry about that.

Ray: I'm not worried about it. I just thought it was a really funny to be called a "*Best Show* poseur."

Tom: Yeah, I've never heard that before. You just do what you wanna do. You just listen how you want. Everyone can be on board how they wanna be on board. There's no line that you have to be on one side of.

Ray: I don't think so either. It's that the radio show seems so completely self-contained. So it's just a group of fans talking? It's not as if there's people posting as characters on the board or anything like that, is there?

Tom: No. It's just people talking about the show. So don't worry about it. You're good.

Ray: I guess I didn't really know about it much. I've always just been a fan of things—I sometimes never want to know too much about the people that do it. I mean, small doses here and there—as long as they're not terrible, horrible monsters. Which I have no suspicion that you or Jon, or anybody on the show, are, but I kind of just like what I like because I like what it is, not because of why the people did it, or who the people are outside of the thing. I've just never been worried about that side. And to be called a poseur, over the age of 30, is such a funny thing [laughter].

Tom: Yeah, that shouldn't... That does not track.

Ray: [laughter] Well, I'm very glad to have your backing on the sentiment.

Tom: Don't sweat it.

Ray: One last question, and it's something that I like to ask people that I do longer interviews with... What's one thing you know to be absolutely true, but that you also know that most people would disagree with you about.

Tom: I guess I don't think that there's really that many bad people out there. I think that people, in terms of being truly evil... I think that there's not really a lot of those people, and people are more acting out of fear or confusion or panic. I don't think that people are inherently—like a lot of people you might not like—I don't think they are bad. I just think they're confused or scared, and that makes them act certain ways.

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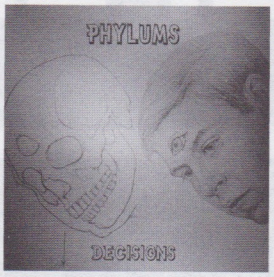

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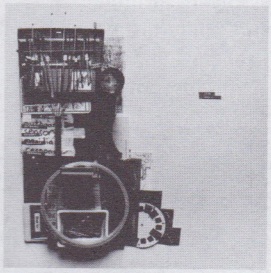

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"Life remains without reason. Why not make some merch to mark the inevitable slip into torpor?"
-someone somewhere, presumably

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Ray Creature

Ray Creature is Jon and Natascha, who live in Bloomington, IN. Their self-titled album, out on Sister Cylinder Records, is full of driving rhythms, dark crooning, great synth sounds, and some catchy hooks. The band began as a solo project for Jon (who also plays in the synthy, post-punk band Legs), but when Natascha joined, she brought not only her great voice and musical insight, but also the chance to do more live instrumentation. As people, they're both smart, articulate, and really thoughtful. They're also my friends, though I admit to not having known much about how they choose to make music. With the album (which has been earning great reviews) and a couple of tours and countless local shows under their belt at this point, they have a lot to say about how and why they do things. We had a really great conversation over a bottle of cheap wine at my kitchen table, about the electronic songwriting process, vocals-as-instruments, finding inspiration in a musical community, and a host of other things. Interview by Cathleen Paquet. Photos provided by the band.

Cathleen: Ray Creature started out as a solo project, with just you, Jon. How did Natascha end up on board? Did you intend to keep it a solo project?

Jon: No, what I was doing was playing with Legs, and I just had all this equipment that I got to dick around with by myself—keyboard midi controller, Pro Tools, a bunch of plug-ins. So I could experiment with different sounds, and I spent my free time doing that for a while, and I never really anticipated that it would be a band, but it started to develop its own aesthetic—all the experiments I was doing—and eventually those became quasi-songs, and then became what are now the Ray Creature songs. Once I realized there was the potential to have songs, and possibly perform them, I kind of did it a little too early, maybe. Like my first show was at the Cream [Bloomington house venue] with…

Natascha: …Dylan Ettinger and Kam Kama, right?

Jon: Yeah, and I played that show before I had any idea of how to do a live version of the things I had recorded.

Cathleen: So you recorded those songs before you started trying to perform them?

Jon: Yeah, so a number of them were pretty much recorded, and I would do the lead line vocals by myself, and that's how I did my first tour with Kam Kama, and after my first show it became apparent to me that I needed to do something different because I felt like I was doing karaoke for my own music. And Natascha, at one point, said that if I wanted someone to play with…

Natascha: …Just that if you ever thought about adding anyone, to let me know… that I'd be interested in playing.

Jon: And she and I have similar taste in music, and we kind of think the same about what sounds cool, which sounds like a stupid thing, but it's actually hard to find people you can be on the same page with. And it just made sense, even though in Ray Creature, she plays bass and drums, and she played neither of those things.

Cathleen: You didn't play bass at all, before Ray Creature?

Natascha: No, I played bass in a terrible industrial band in high school, for like, two weeks, and that's the extent of the bass playing I had experience with. I just learned it as we went.

Jon: I knew that you would be able to do it, obviously; otherwise we wouldn't be doing it. But I just knew because we thought the same about music, and had a lot of the same intuitions about a lot of things, that she would do things that would work well with the band, and it worked out that way. So after the first tour, we started playing live together around Bloomington, and it worked out well.

Cathleen: So you just mentioned your brief stint with an industrial band in high school. How long have you both been playing music? What are your instruments? Childhood piano lessons?

Natascha: I've been in some kind

of performance basically my whole life. I was in dance from age two to fourteen. I started playing the trumpet in 5th grade, and that was my main instrument though high school and early college. I sang a lot. I played in bands in high school, mostly singing and playing the guitar a little bit.
Jon: I was in concert and marching band in high school.
Cathleen: That makes sense, knowing what your drums look like. [Jon's drums are green and white striped, with his initials in a crest on the bass drum head.]
Jon: [Laughs] Yeah, one of the nicer things I own. But in that context was where I met my friend Dennis, who was in my first band with me. And he was also a drummer, so we would switch back and forth, playing drums and guitar, and neither of us could play guitar that well, and we still can't to this day. We both know enough to do what needs to be done, but we were really trained as drummers. So when we played shows, people would always complement us on our drums but never for anything else.
Cathleen: Like your guitar playing.
Jon: Yeah, so then we started playing with our friend Kris, who played bass. She's not a trained musician, but she has a very intuitive playing style, a really good bassist with some really interesting ways of figuring out how to fit into a song, it's not really conventional bass playing. So she would play in such a way that syncopated with the drums, and that became… our first band was called Posture Coach, it was mainly drum and bass oriented with rudimentary guitar over the top. And that's kind of how Legs developed, with me kind of playing guitar like it's a drum, pretty much. It's all percussive, and syncopation, it's not a lot of chord progressions. It's more about rhythm and how bass and drums can interact with that.
Natascha: I would almost say that your synth parts in Ray Creature are sort of similar.
Jon: Yeah, I play everything kind of like a drum. That's why a lot of the Ray Creature songs don't have conventional chord progressions. They're often just one chord for a minute and just moving the rhythm and bass around that one chord. That's often the approach I take, where I'll have one note held out for an entire passage and play the bass around that note… I'm not really trained to know how to talk about it…

Cathleen: No, that's fine. I wanted to get to this anyway. I've never really dabbled in electronic music much myself, so I don't really know what the process is like at all. What is your songwriting process like? I guess you write your own beats. Do you ever use samples? How do you shape your songs?
Jon: Well, it started out with me taking old Posture Coach recordings and chopping up the drum parts and using those as samples to make new drum parts and playing over the top of those. But then I realized I could use a drum machine, which is a lot easier and sounds a lot better. So the way that I do it now, I almost always start with the fundamental drum part, and then I work on — usually, synth bass, but sometimes regular bass, to figure out the main rhythmic structure of the song. And then I'll go over the top of that with synth lines, to see what works. So it's always from the ground up.
Cathleen: So you go rhythm to melody, versus melody to rhythm. With most bands, in your typical rock band set-up at least, the guitar player is going to write the songs, and write the melody, or the vocalist is going to shape the melody, and usually drums and bass get added to that.
Natascha: Yeah, I think I've kind of approached it the same way with electronic songwriting. I think you have to with the structure of the software you're using; it makes it easier to set it up that way, and throw the rest on top of it.

Jon: Exactly—because you need something to play along with.
Natascha: It's probably possible to do it the other way around, but it just makes the most sense, given the format.
Jon: It lends itself to my inclination anyway, which is to start out with drums. So it makes sense, for me. And the chord structures and lead lines are always afterthoughts, behind the rhythm section, because that always establishes the mood of the song, for me. Like this rhythm section sounds like this kind of song, so I'll write at that idea. And then the vocals are the last thing; and I go over the song, making up gibberish, that I then listen back to and try to find words in.
Cathleen: I wanted to ask you about that. I've noticed you didn't put liner notes or a lyric sheet in with the album, and to me, it seems that with your vocals being pretty stylized… I get the feeling that your vocals are treated more like another instrument to convey a sound, rather than to convey an idea or a narrative lyrically. Is that accurate or intentional?
Natascha: That seems like a pretty good way to say that.
Jon: Yes, I would say that is an accurate statement. That's how they begin. That's really what they are, in essence. Once I get my gibberish down, that establishes the cadence and the hook to the vocal. Then I'll listen to that to make it inspire lyrics for me. And I'll write to those sounds.
Natascha: Something that makes sense.
Jon: There is a good lineage of people who I listen to a lot who do that kind of nonsense singing approach. Damo Suzuki from Can does that, Alan Vega from Suicide, Michael Gira from Swans. They do that voice-as-instrument thing, which I would say, if you're trying to write something, and you can't find lyrics, and you can't find a hook, just fucking yell something over the top of the music and it can be cool. I think it's totally legitimate.
Natascha: Yeah, I don't think every song needs to have a story, or some sort of meaning behind it, at least in terms of lyrics.
Jon: The human voice may be

treated as mostly a vehicle for meaning, but it can be a sonic presence, that — in its own right — is powerful. When I get excited about playing, it's always in that case where I can just let go and go crazy at the music with my voice. That's the really fun part.

Cathleen: So then how about your vocals, Natascha? Would you say it's a similar process?

Natascha: At this point, what we've done so far is stuff that was written pretty much before I joined, so it's mostly what Jon directed me to do, so I don't know what it will be like in the future. We'll have to figure it out.

Jon: We're working on that now. But there are lyrics, to answer your question.

Cathleen: Yeah, I figured there were, I was just wondering how much of an afterthought they actually were.

Jon: My day job, as you know, is a teacher of English, and I write at the university level, so I'm *thinking* about words. But in terms of music, the words are the last thought, but once I go and sit down to write them, I… I try my best… to make them good. There *are* words, and I think that they're good words. [Laughter all around]

Cathleen: I don't doubt that they are.

Jon: And I stand behind them— though I do not wish to emphasize that aspect of the music. I was asked by Scott [Ferguson, of Sister Cylinder] when he put out the record if we wanted a lyric sheet, and I said no, because I don't even really like lyric sheets.

Natascha: I don't think it was necessary for the aesthetic we were trying to put forward with the artwork.

Jon: And I'm always disappointed when I read lyrics separate from the music, because lyrics are made in the music, they're supposed to be expressed in the music, and when you subtract them from that, they become something totally different, and it reads like a bad poem, when it really is a good song. The words on the page aren't right, because they're not given the emotional current of the song that supports them.

Cathleen: Yeah, I don't ever like to look at a lyric sheet without listening to the record. Because even some of the greatest songs— and even songs that you think the lyrics are really good—when you remove those words from the song, they don't usually hold the same weight.

Jon: Here's one thing I've learned, as a scholar of English poetry, when you're writing actual—don't quote that shit—when you're writing a poem…

Cathleen: That means I will.

Jon: When you're writing a poem, you have to provide that cadence, and you have to think about the way that word will be read, and all those considerations go into the composition of a poem on the page, but when you're expressing lyrics in songs, it seems like…

Cathleen: A lot of that work is done for you in the music.

Jon: Exactly. So yeah, lyric sheets: I don't think we'll probably ever do that. Bad idea.

Cathleen: So you mentioned that you record a lot of stuff at home, and I know you did the record at home. What's your set-up like? Because the record sounds really good.

Jon: Thank you. It was done in my bedroom. My set-up is me sitting on my bed, with my computer on a TV tray, and my MIDI controller here, so that with my left hand, I can play lines, and with my right hand, manipulate sounds, the effects and things like that.

Cathleen: So I guess when you're recording electronic stuff, you don't have to worry as much about microphones, and sound barriers, and amps bleeding together, and a lot of the other difficulties people have with home recording.

Jon: There is a guitar, and obviously there are vocals, but even that shit is done in my bedroom. I find ways of isolating, like in my bathroom or something, and singing in there. But one thing I was lucky with, growing up, that guy who was in my band with me, Dennis, he went to study audio engineering at SAE in NY, and I learned a lot watching him record us. So I would watch him using Pro Tools and different effects patches and things, and by watching him, I picked up enough to begin to do this stuff. So the recording process is all in the box, as they say, it's in the computer. For the next album, we're trying to get out of that a little bit.

Cathleen: In what way?

Jon: Well, for one, I bought an analog synth. Korg reissued one of their analog synths from the '80s. It's a miniature version, but it's all analog circuitry. Natascha will be playing bass, that'll be mic'd when we record…

Natascha: And maybe some other instruments, too.

Jon: She's thinking about getting a lap steel. We're also trying to find a backing band, or a band to make the electronic stuff more organic in a live performance. We're trying to get out of that…

Natascha: Just hitting "play" and doing stuff on top of that.

Jon: For a long time we've been doing backing tracks, 'cause we don't have a drummer, and I can't play five synth parts at once, so the less essential synth parts get put in the backing tracks, too. We want to try to make that all organic, to where…

Cathleen: So you can play all of it live.

Jon: Yeah, with no backing tracks.

Natascha: Or at least very minimal.

Jon: Because there is so much going on in those songs, just because I had no leash on me, so I could put whatever the fuck I wanted to in there, without thinking, "Oh, I have to play this live at some point." So now I would like to have human beings perform the parts live with me.

Cathleen: Now that you have some time and distance from all of these songs that you were first working on, do you find that not having that leash to keep you from piling on whatever the fuck you wanted was a good thing or a bad thing? Because I find that a lot of times, being in a band is… your band can be a really good editor. And when left to your own devices, you might throw all kinds of shit in there, whereas when you have a band, you have to run it through that filter. So not only do you edit yourself a little more, because you know you have to run it through these other people, but then they edit it a little more, too.

Jon: I think Natascha probably has a pretty good perspective on that.

Natascha: Well, your instinct is to do more and more, and maybe we could just add a little of that extra element, and while I think it works a lot of the time, it's probably also not necessary a lot of the time. So I think I've been like, "Hey, maybe we could just not do that, or take that out or that out, or maybe just do that part live." So stripping it down a bit is something I think we've been trying to do more of lately.

Cathleen: I think it can be a really good thing to have someone to rein you in a little bit.

Natascha: Absolutely. I agree with that completely.

Jon: Natascha definitely provides that editorial service, when she hears me present a song with 20 different things happening.

Natascha: There are a lot of times though, like when we were

recording, there were things you would point out to me that I didn't even know were there, just because there were so many different things going on. You'd say, "You know that thing?" and I'm like, "No, I don't know that thing. I don't hear that in there." You probably spent two hours thinking about that thing.

Cathleen: That no one else will ever notice.

Jon: A few of my friends, who have seen the live show, have said that, "There's a lot of things going on in the record, that I don't hear you guys play live." Well, we were doing it live; it's just that it's been so subtly buried under everything else. It obviously doesn't matter to anyone but me, so…

Cathleen: Well, also, I think, in a live setting, there is so much you can't control, the noise…

Natascha: The size of the room, the people in the room…

Cathleen: Just so many extra elements you can't control for.

Jon: Yeah. To answer your question: I think it was good, in the beginning, to be able to do everything I wanted, and I think it's better now that I can't do that. Because I couldn't have figured out what the sound should be without having done all of those experiments, but now that I know what the sound is for the band, I can do less, and invite other people in to do more. But I had to get through this starting block, which required a whole lot of weirdness, some of which is a vestigial structure left within the album, things that could have been removed, but were part of the evolutionary process of writing it, that I think were good, but are maybe not essential to the sound anymore.

Natascha: There were a lot of things we ended up taking out of the songs to play them live, right? We really stripped them down a lot, because we realized you could really hear what we were playing live better once a lot of that other stuff was gone.

Jon: Yeah, and that stuff was actually distracting. And I don't know how it is listening to the album, because I have listened to the album, since I've written and recorded it, so many fucking times that I have no perspective on it.

Cathleen: It's hard. You need time and space. Fresh ears.

Jon: Probably a decade.

Cathleen: The more you work on it, the more time you need away from it, to be able to listen to it fresh.

[We pour more wine.]

Cathleen: I have one more, multi-faceted question: I feel like you guys play music that's maybe not what a lot of other bands in Bloomington are doing. Do you guys see yourselves as part of a greater musical community or continuum, or do you want to just set out to do your own thing?

Natascha: As the non-writer in the band, I feel like going on tour showed me that there are a lot of other people who are into what we do or are doing similar things. There's not a huge scene for it in Bloomington, but it's also possible there is, and we don't know about it. You can exist alongside something for a long time here and not ever know about it.

Cathleen: It's crazy how Bloomington can be so small but so big.

Natascha: It happens to me all the time here. I've been here for three years and I just keep finding out about new things. But yeah, going on tour made me realize that this is a thing that people are into, and it can be lasting. But it can be hard, here in Bloomington, to get diverse shows—I feel like we end up playing with the same people a lot.

Cathleen: Do you feel like, when you guys go on tour, that people expect you guys to sound a certain way? Do you think outsiders have a specific idea of what's going on in Bloomington? Is that something you guys want to be identified with?

Jon: I like the stuff that happens here. The music that we make, it sounds like—well, I've heard people refer to it as goth, which I never thought of it as, or as Depeche Mode kind of stuff, but I've never listened to much Depeche Mode.

Natascha: You got a lot of Nine Inch Nails references at first, and you kept saying, "I don't even listen to Nine Inch Nails."

Jon: I know the big hits from my childhood. But I was listening to a lot of Can, and Neu!, and This Heat, experimental electronic bands, whose emphasis was more on, not so much chord progressions, or chromatic stuff, but more on driving rhythms, and sudden abrupt, but arresting changes. So a thing will happen for a while, then out of nowhere, another thing reorients your perspective on the song, and it can all of a sudden go from a punk, driving thing, to a dance feel. That's what I thought we were doing, so I thought it was of a piece with a lot of things that were happening in Bloomington, but it doesn't necessarily sound like that to people. And reviews that we've had so far, they always say, "an unlikely sound from the Midwest!" But people in the Midwest know that it's not an unlikely sound. There is so much cool shit that happens in Bloomington, here in Indiana, and in the broader Midwest. But when people outside the Midwest listen to it, they're like, "Huh. People do this. [sarcastically] They must've been on the internet for a while."

Natascha: "Who woulda thought?"

Jon: "They musta heard some things." But there's all kinds of cool shit that happens in this town. I like being a part of this town. I wouldn't want to be in a goth scene in fuckin' whatever city. I like that we get reinterpreted as goth. It's interesting to me that that happens. But I like being a part of this. I respect a lot of the other bands that are doing shit around here. I enjoy them. A lot of them are my friends. It's fun. It's not like I have to think about rivaling x other electronic group. So yeah, I think this is like the perfect place for us to do what we do. Even if it means that we're not in a highly competitive, high-stakes atmosphere where you can catch a wave and ride to the top. But here we can do what we want and it's somewhat unique in the context.

Cathleen: Do you feel like you feed off of other musicians here, and do you feel like there's a community of musical and intellectual sharing?

Jon: Yeah.

Natascha: Yeah, for sure. It's kind of the best thing about this town.

Jon: I don't think you can make good music unless you go out and listen to other people play. Well, no, that's a dumb statement, of course you can, but it really helps if you go out and hear the sounds people make in basements, in living rooms, on stages. I'll go to shows, and I'll hear a chord change, or a rhythm, and I'll think, "I want to do something like that" Or, "I want to think about that texture I just heard, and I want to think about how I can use that in a song I'm working on." If you're not exposing yourself to other musicians you respect, then you're not pushing your boundaries. So, yeah, here's to Bloomington.

[A raising of wine glasses.]

* * *

Cathleen has been playing and writing about music for about 20 years. A hairstylist by day, she also plays bass in the band Cooked Books, writes for her Tumblr, Not Just Boy's Fun, and tries to fix things around the house.

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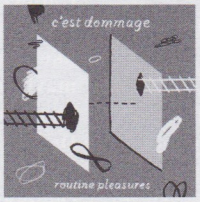

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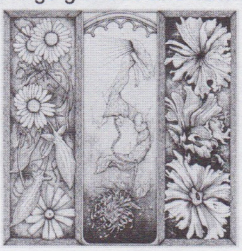

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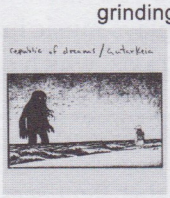

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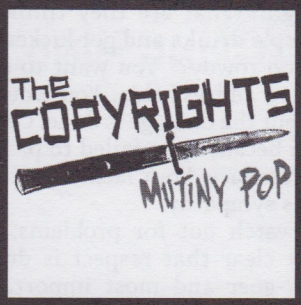

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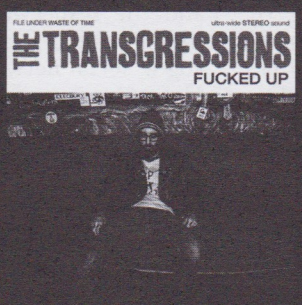

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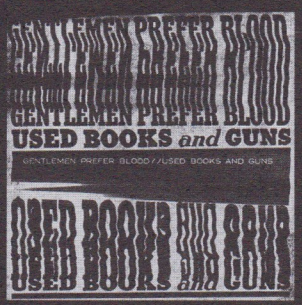

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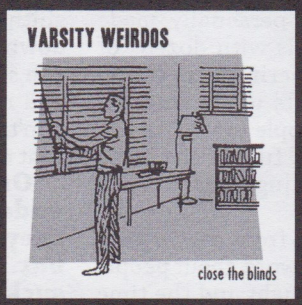

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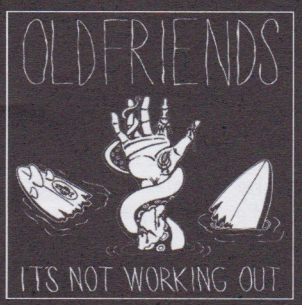

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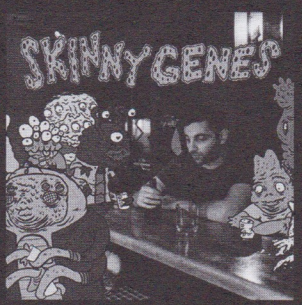


SKINNY GENES
"Ugh" EP

a conversation about 2040 w/ Bert

One of the short list of perks relative to being a purveyor of subversive art is getting to know to people that make the shit happen. One of said people is not only a pal, but a coworker. Say hello to Bert! He is an integral part of the booking, staging, sound and general whereabouts of the famed Chicago DIY venue, the 2040. Today, in between tending to our responsibilities and drinking coffee, we were fortunate enough to have this little exchange via email on the topic of positives and pitfalls of doing real work in underground arts and providing one of the most integral parts of any music scene: a venue.

Bert, and the 2040, can reached online or in person—should you know where to look (ask a punk). Also, I highly recommend you scope Mr. Bert's creative endeavors as well. He plays music in the forms of Garbage Friends and Polish Gifts. He's also part of Chicago art and music collective Access Praxis, which coordinates, runs, and organizes events at DIY spaces in town. Interview by James Lonergan.

Certainly, running a DIY spot definitely carries a pretty long list of shit that can just go terribly wrong. What are some of the challenges you face most often in operation? Is being in charge of running a spot like yours something that you learn over time or is it fully sink or swim?

This brings to mind a bunch of bad shit that we took pretty seriously over the years, both as a show space and as people that were new to a community as well as a, cough, if you will, a scene. If were talking about challenges hosting shows, this is going to read bad, but it's a combination of the folks that are coming to shows, and us being unable to read people's intentions.

Some guests can be a wildcard that can really fuck up an evening. In the past, we've had two incidents where confused individuals show up with an SS pin on a jacket and some parodied death's head t-shirt for some asshole's Chicago brewery restaurant, no joke. We've since learned that a former housemate felt it necessary to tell some show goers that he believed in freedom of speech so strongly that he did not care who was in attendance. How do we know about this? It's because someone told us about it after these fights started and finished. Both times. These people being in our house was seen as sympathy towards these respective individual's flawed ideology or ignorance. Fuck. Do we deserve to catch shit for having these dipshits in our house?

A short sighted answer to that is no. That's what I felt then, and now I'm feeling like I was a dipshit in my naivety. Yeah, you do have to think about what could happen or worst case scenarios all the time. I worry about that shit a lot. Every show. One side of that fight sees, this house has these fucks in here, and they don't do anything about it, and the other side says, I went to a punk show and some fucks jumped me. The former saw us as sympathetic towards white supremacists and chose to run with that, enacting a boycott against the house, and the respective house bands at the time by posting an open letter via the en vogue social networking site of the time, MySpace.

Okay, you just read that and you're thinking, "These people think someone talking shit about them on the internet is that important?" We were bummed. Really bummed the fuck out. We didn't see it happen, and a day or two later, this comes out and we're all hearing and seeing things second and third hand.

At the time, I was not living here but was here for every show. My housemate, Mez, was living here then, and this was only a few months in to him coming in to the neighborhood. He personally made an effort to address this with dozens of individuals. He's not covering up or trying to sweep these incidents under the rug. Mez made it clear to people that we're not some invasive, apolitical fucks. That takes time. That takes building relationships with people.

One thing you learn from that is how wide spread a rumor or word about people can get. He put the thought and the time in to it, and a couple months later we're playing a benefit titled "Rock Against Racism" one neighborhood over. The latter in that story got beat the fuck up. Bad. That person might have learned a lesson, but on the other side of the coin, might have even delved deeper in to their flawed ideology. All in all, this was seen as us being not vigilant enough to operate a safe space, and I'll be perfectly honest, we can't police everyone in here.

We can catch some bigot mouthing off or some dipshit being a sexist pig and kick them the fuck out. What do they learn though? What are they thinking? "I had a couple drinks and got kicked out for being too rowdy?" You want to start a dialogue to address this. You would if you could, but the damage is done. Others took action because you failed to prevent it in the first place. Your lack of action is perceived as sympathy.

We do watch out for problems, and we make it clear that respect is due to every show-goer and most importantly the neighborhood. Only in the last few years have we become rooted enough in this scene where we have guests helping us, and for lack of a better word, enforce our lack of tolerance for disrespectful shitheads. You meet folks that are just down to help and want to make a show run smoothly and over time, there's more and more folks like that at each show. I don't need to worry as much anymore, but that definitely didn't happen overnight.

One thing people might not understand (I don't know why they wouldn't already know this, but...) how much the cops fucking suck and can destroy entire music scenes on a whim, it seems. I know you've experienced some blow back from the law in the past. Looking forward, what ways, if

any, can/should the 'scene' make it easier and safer for DIY venues? Is technology/surveillance just too on top of the game to get around?

The actual police have only been at this house once, and it was for some people hollering in the yard during a show. Fine. Our awesome next door neighbor told the cops to get lost after they were looking for excuses to bust up what they probably thought was a party. We have never had to stop a show because of the police shutting us down.

People promote shows here online pretty regularly, that's a thing, and it hasn't bitten us in the ass. A bunch of the beat cops around here probably know the house by now, but if the cops know, they're not perceiving us as some sort of threat or problem worth investigating. Historically, the police have been known to monitor Chicago spaces during certain times of political *cough* duress under the guidance of hopefully soon deposed mayor, Rahm Emanuel. In short, they were looking to catch protesting troublemakers congregating.

The Chicago police will sooner respond to momentary gun fire rather than a semi-audible three hour show in this neighborhood. Same deal with a friend's space four blocks away. I feel like a handful of spaces get into the habit of not having people spilling out into the neighborhood, and that's lead to some spaces staying around for a long while. So go ahead, go to or have a keg, or a sixteen band grind fest, promote the fuck out of it, just keep that shit inside the space. Tell people how important it is to respect the neighbors. In most cases they're the ones that are most likely to call for a noise complaint first.

When you're a hollering nuisance to the neighborhood with people pissing and littering everywhere you put yourself on the radar with the cops threatening to come back. Repeat that every week and you're asking for it. It can be as cut and dry as that. That's just keeping the cops out of our hair though. I can't speak for other spaces.

We have private security for the housing authority harassing us on a pretty regular basis, basically enforcing a property line between our house and our neighbors. We're on great terms with our neighbors, but these rent-a-cops want to play some kind of power game, despite our neighbors inviting us over. If we can keep a show going we'll abide by their request to stay on our property, and we'll cram thirty people in our yard, careful to not sit on a certain side of the stairs. Fucking ridiculous—yeah. They're such a non-issue and our several interactions with them have taught us how to talk to them. They've given us shit dozens of times, but they haven't called in the cops. I figure they are monitoring housing authority property sooner than creeping on Facebook looking for shows. I've entertained the idea that we're that important, but we're probably not worth their time. Take that as you will.

You've seen/heard a lot of good shit and presumably just as much bad shit. What's the thing that you'd like to see vanquished from the underground music community? Is it mediocre bands, is it shitty politics and beyond?

Post-hardcore, garage rock, and dogs. Kidding, sort of (don't bring dogs to harsh noise shows. [***Ed. note: Don't be a nub and don't bring dogs to any shows. -Ray and Jim***]).

I would like to see competing shows on the same night disappear. That's hard to do. Granted the noise or psych scene and the punk scene aren't really stepping on each others toes too often, but it's just a bummer when you can't possibly catch both shows in one night.

We have a coordinated schedule with one of the punk venues four blocks away in our neighborhood and that works out great, but there's another venue, just as close, that has had several shows the same night. There's like little to no overlap in the crowds, but it's still so close in this neighborhood that I want to see what's up over there.

There's been a case of two touring bands from the same city separately playing respective spaces the same night. It would have been cool to have them under the same roof, but it seems like it comes down to just lack of coordination and not planning far enough in advance. No discredit to anyone involved with hosting or scheduling, it was just like, oh, that's weird. We dropped the ball. This problem is especially tricky; how could you possibly know what's going on all over the city? We need the NSA to take everyone's personal data to make a handy calendar of touring bands movements and house show dates.

There's definitely a lot of responsibility that comes with the territory of running/operating a place like yours, particularly in the ways of creating 'safe spaces' of positive interaction for people that are most exposed to the ugliness of American society. What kind of work is required to maintain that atmosphere while the 'scene' constantly expands? Does the scene become more intelligent or less intelligent with growth?

Keeping in touch and being organized with folks who book and play shows is really important. Put some thought in to the folks you are booking and folks you book with, and pick their brains. You learn about each other from really limited interactions. You can get on the same wavelength with folks after a really positive show, and that's really important to me.

We have a sign that says "No Oppressive Bullshit." When you surround yourself with people that are just as serious as you are about that one simple thing, you get that much closer to a safer-space. When the number of attendees goes up, the likelihood that some shithead is going start some shit goes up as well.

I like to try introduce myself to new faces at a show and most times they're inquisitive about the space. I'll let them know, yeah it's a punk house, it's a long running show space, but it's a place that people live in and next door to.

I think if you put a face on it, be it Mez's or mine, it gives folks the idea that this isn't some vacant trash can of a squat. I guess I'd like folks to make that more known throughout any scene. Like, yeah, I am a person at this house, please let me know about any problems.

A lot of random venues are really cool and I like meeting and chatting up the folks who run it but a lot of those folks are nameless at some spots. Guess you gotta be in the know.

If you're serious about putting bands up all the time, I think you should be serious about making the distinction between a show benefitting a band or artist rather than a five dollar cover for some basement rager to drink in. You've got to figure that new folks will show up at each show and who knows what vibe they're getting from their surroundings. Tell them what your space is about and you both might learn something neat.

In your opinion, what should the DIY community do more of to keep progressing and keeping spaces available? Will it simply require more people that are willing to take on the risk/responsibility or do you see bigger issues on the horizon?

The simplest way to keep progressing would be for spaces to proliferate. I really want to hope that other folks kick around the idea of having bands or galleries or swap meets at their house or apartment.

It's totally impossible for some folks, I get that, but if you have walls or a corner, you can have paintings or visuals or poetry or stand-up comedy, and an acoustic act to boot during your next par-tay. Or get people together to learn how to screen print shirts or patches. Make a thing of it, then make a regular thing of it.

Yeah, as you said take on the responsibility. Random people are always asking for shows here and the question in the back of my mind is, what's stopping you from doing it at your place or your bandmates place or any of the other twelve people in the other bands places?

MARTIN SORRONDEGUY

Martin Sorrondeguy's work speaks for itself. Member of Los Crudos, Limp Wrist, Needles, former distribution coordinator for Maximum Rocknroll, published photographer, film director, record label proprietor... and all around wonderful guy to sit down and have a conversation with. We got together in Martin's old apartment in San Francisco about two weeks before I moved back to Chicago to talk about his life and DIY and punk rock. A few months after I had been living in Chicago I showed up early to a show I was playing to load in, and there was Martin, hanging outside the venue with his camera and a giant smile. He's since moved back to Chicago, which makes me very excited to see what his undying energy, and love of DIY punk, will bring to Chicago in the coming months.

Introduction and interview by Ray Martinez.
Photographs by Patrick Houdek.

Ray: You were born in Uruguay. When did you move to the States and how old were you?

Martin: My parents brought me to states when I was about two.

Ray: So you don't really have any memories from living there?

Martin: No, my memories came afterward in '91 when I went out there for six months – I lived there for six months. More of my memories were story based versus actual recallings.

Ray: And you moved to Chicago?

Martin: Yeah, my grandma went to Chicago. It was a really weird situation in that the U.S. opened the border... The U.S. and Australia had opened the border to Uruguay, and my dad came to the States.

Ray: Was it like an open visa?

Martin: It was.

Ray: Was it a citizenship program?

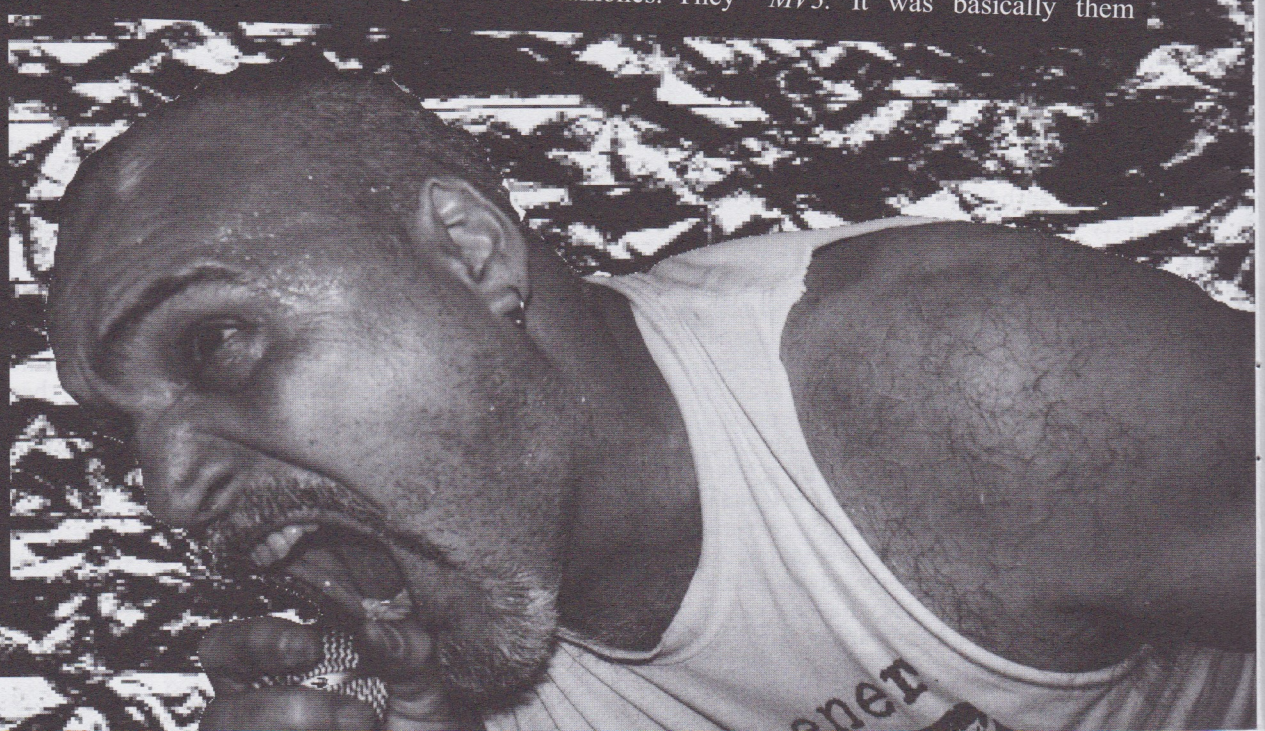
Martin: It lead to that. It was like a permanent residency program, and for some reason my dad chose the U.S. over Australia.

Ray: My mom came over via Operation Pedro Pan from Cuba. It was the same kind of thing where America, after the [Cuban] revolution [the US government] was like, "Send your kids over, we'll put them on a fast track to citizenship and have them work." It's really interesting how that kinda stuff happens because of politics. So when did you start getting into punk?

Martin: My first exposure to punk was through my cousins who lived in New York. I went to visit them, I was maybe around 11 years old, and that was in '79. They were already huge into the Ramones. They had ticket stubs from shows.

Ray: Were they punks, like full on?

Martin: They weren't full on punks, they were rockers. They were into all sorts of stuff, but they had already seen the Ramones multiple times - so that's where I heard that. They had the Sex Pistols album and a couple of other punk records and that's the first time I had ever heard punk. I also knew about it cause I was such a KISS freak – I still have the magazine, it was from like '78, where there was a spread on punk. They talk about Sham 69 and about the Rezillos and the Damned, bands like that. So I was familiar with this thing "punk" but I wasn't like, "I'm a punk!" That didn't happen until the '80s. In '81, '82 I had another sort of fascination with it again via a video show that was coming through Chicago, *MV3*. It was basically them



showing some L.A. dance – it was almost like an *American Bandstand* type show – that was all new wave with a little bit of punk thrown in. Then throughout the years I saw things that made an impact on me.

Ray: Weren't you a b-boy for a while?

Martin: Yeah, I was. That was '82, '83, '84. Right after that, at the end of '84, is when I went full on punk.

Ray: So there was a time when you were the b-boy that was kind of into punk? Or the punk that was into dancing?

Martin: You know, it was like, I was into anything. I loved dancing and I was fascinated with the physicality of b-boying – I thought it looked *really* fucking cool. And it was something that was way more accessible of a feeling to kids in my neighborhood, so it kinda made sense that I got into that. But as that was kind of coming to an end I really knew that, "Dude. I'm going punk. I have to get into punk." And that was kind of what happened.

Ray: Chicago has always been such a big city, both physically and culturally. It seems like punk was a very North side thing.

Martin: It was.

Ray: Being that you were South side, Latino, and punk was a North side white thing for the most part, how did you...

Martin: I mean, that's what it appeared to be, if you didn't really know. There were Latinos in punk, and people of color in punk, but you got the impression that it was a predominately white thing. It was a North side thing for sure. There were South side punks, but they were so spread out and disconnected. There was only one bar that I heard of, and the name I probably won't remember now, that was on the South side that was frequented by punks. I remember Naked Raygun talking about it closing down, and I knew *of* it, but at the time I wasn't 21, and there was no way I would have been able to get into that place. But, you know, there were a bunch at one point. Like a lot of kids that were going to all these different high schools on the South side, whether it was Curie or St. Rita, that started seeing each other around and banded together. So it was all these kind of metal and punk kids, kids who were just discovering hardcore. There would be times where we'd go to a show, and there would be fucking 20 of us jumping on the train and really freaking people out.

Ray: Going across the city...

Martin: Yeah! Going to the North side. Going to the Metro, or the Cubby Bear, or whatever.

Ray: Cause it always seemed to me that Chicago, and Chicagoland, is so big that the distance from, say, Pilsen to the Cubby Bear is almost the same as Evanston to the Cubby Bear. It seems you had to be much more dedicated than just going to something in the neighborhood.

Martin: It really is a big city. You had to... If you were really into something like that, that kind of underground music, and you were starving for it, you had to work for it. So yeah, that was something that was just a part of what we started to do because we were that into it. We would travel the whole city to check out a show, or go to Wax Trax! and buy records.

Ray: Wax Trax! always comes up. And that was something I found really interesting, that I didn't know about until that documentary came out (*You Weren't There*). I knew about Wax Trax! and it's historical relevance as a hub spot, but the documentary taught me that the early punk scene in Chicago had a lot of overlap with the gay scene. The guys who ran Wax Trax!, and all those early bars...

Martin: That's an early punk thing, not just Chicago. You find that that happened in a lot of scenes... Texas had that. There were a lot of scenes where it was the only spaces open to having punk music were gay clubs. So, that wasn't too uncommon.

Ray: I guess with me, being of my generation of Chicagoland punk, I find that very interesting because it was a very suburban thing at that point. The idea of gay punk as an aspect of the culture wasn't on my radar for the longest time.

Martin: I don't think it was... I think there were bars that were hosting punk shows. It wasn't a "gay punk" thing. But a lot of the early scene, when you talk to old punks, was kind of loose like that. There were people who were gay, or whatever, but I think a lot of punks went to those because they wanted to see those bands – not necessarily because they were gay. I mean, there might have been crossover, obviously, but not completely. I don't think it was one thing like, "Oh! The early Homocore scene!"

Ray: I guess to me it's always been so suburban because I came up with the generation of Screeching Weasel, as opposed to the generation of Naked Raygun, being the big Chicago punk band – and it doesn't really get any more suburban than Screeching Weasel [laughter]. So when did you start your first band?

Martin: It wasn't until Crudos...

Ray: That was your first band?!

Martin: Yeah! That was the end of 1990. It's funny, cause I tried out for a band before that... but they thought I sucked.

Ray: What band?

Martin: They didn't have a name yet, but it was Dan Schafer – Vapid – and Brian who played in Sludgeworth and Screeching Weasel. They wanted to do a hardcore band. So I went to the practice space and, you know, I was still a little timid, and I really wasn't there where I needed to be, and we tried it once – I practiced with them one time – and I felt I sucked, they thought I was terrible... and lo and behold, a few years later I start doing Crudos. I felt way more like it was time, and I found a voice way more through that. I just wasn't ready for it at that time.

Ray: Because you were taking photos of bands well before that. I remember one

of the first times seeing your name was in some Screeching Weasel liner notes for a band photo and I was like, "that's not a white name." [laughter] It really blew my mind.

Martin: I did a lot of... Screeching Weasel, in particular, I did multiple records. I had photos as early as *Boogada,* and that was their second LP. There was the *Punkhouse* 7" and then all the other records, almost for the next four records. But I did photos of a lot of bands. I did Pegboy photos, Bhopal Stiffs... You know, a lot of the older punk scene in Chicago knows me as Martin, the photographer. They don't know me from Los Crudos. They wouldn't even know "Martin from Limp Wrist." And it's funny because it came up a few times with friends of mine in Chicago. There's that Punch In The Face album that came out, and there was this old guy there and he asked, "Who put this record out?" They were like, "Oh, this label, Lengua Armada... Martin put it out." The guy goes, "Martin?! I know Martin. He's the photographer." And they were like, "That's him!" So it's a complete generational disconnect.

Ray: Did you go to school for photography?

Martin: Yeah. I went to Columbia College and got my degree in photography from them.

Ray: You put out that book a couple of years ago, *Get Shot*, and it isn't just punk photography. I mean, I assumed you weren't just taking pictures at shows, but what draws you to taking photos – besides documenting bands and documenting punk scenes? Because you do a lot of portraiture that is amazing.

Martin: Thanks! I mean, I love photography and I love studying lights and seeing how when a certain quality of light hits a scene, or a place, or a person. I like capturing that. I also like capturing expressions, or sort of a hint of a person. I like capturing that moment.

Ray: So you're not looking to take the photo that represents the subject - like, "This is the photo of truth." Just an aspect?

Martin: It's a moment. I mean, truth? What truth? There's a whole theory that a photo tells a million stories. Yeah, a million made up stories. It doesn't always tell each story. There are some photos that I think that do, but it just depends. I might capture a moment that's about that day, that time, that person – something that impacted me, and it connects to that moment, but it's not as if this is *the* image that tells the entire story. That seems like a very odd outlook to me. You can't get a photo to tell one story. If you're talking about the story of punk it takes volumes to get a clear idea of it. My photography does sort of look at a situation or a scene, and I can talk to you about it, look at it and go, "Look at what they're wearing. It's so of this time, and this street." The cars are old, that kind of stuff - it reveals things. But that's just a whole deeper discussion about photography.

Ray: Once Crudos started taking off did you ever feel that you had to make a decision between the music and the photography?

Martin: No. I always took my camera with me, so it wasn't that I had to sacrifice one for the other.

Ray: Did you look at it as an opportunity to take more photos?

Martin: Absolutely. And I did until I was at a Dickies show and somebody did a dive, and this motorcycle boot kicked my flash and ripped the top of my camera off. It got extremely damaged and I paid to have it repaired, went on two tours consecutively and shot about 80 rolls of film, came back, and none of it was exposed. It was all fucked up. Something had really gone wrong. It really fucked me up for a long time and I didn't take my camera to shows.

Ray: Oh, wow. How long of a period was that?

Martin: It took me *a while* to get back into it because I was so discouraged over - not just the financial loss of it – it was the never being able to have that again. Half the bands are gone. It was just like, "Oh my god. I lost this." It took me a long time. I didn't take a camera to shows for very long time.

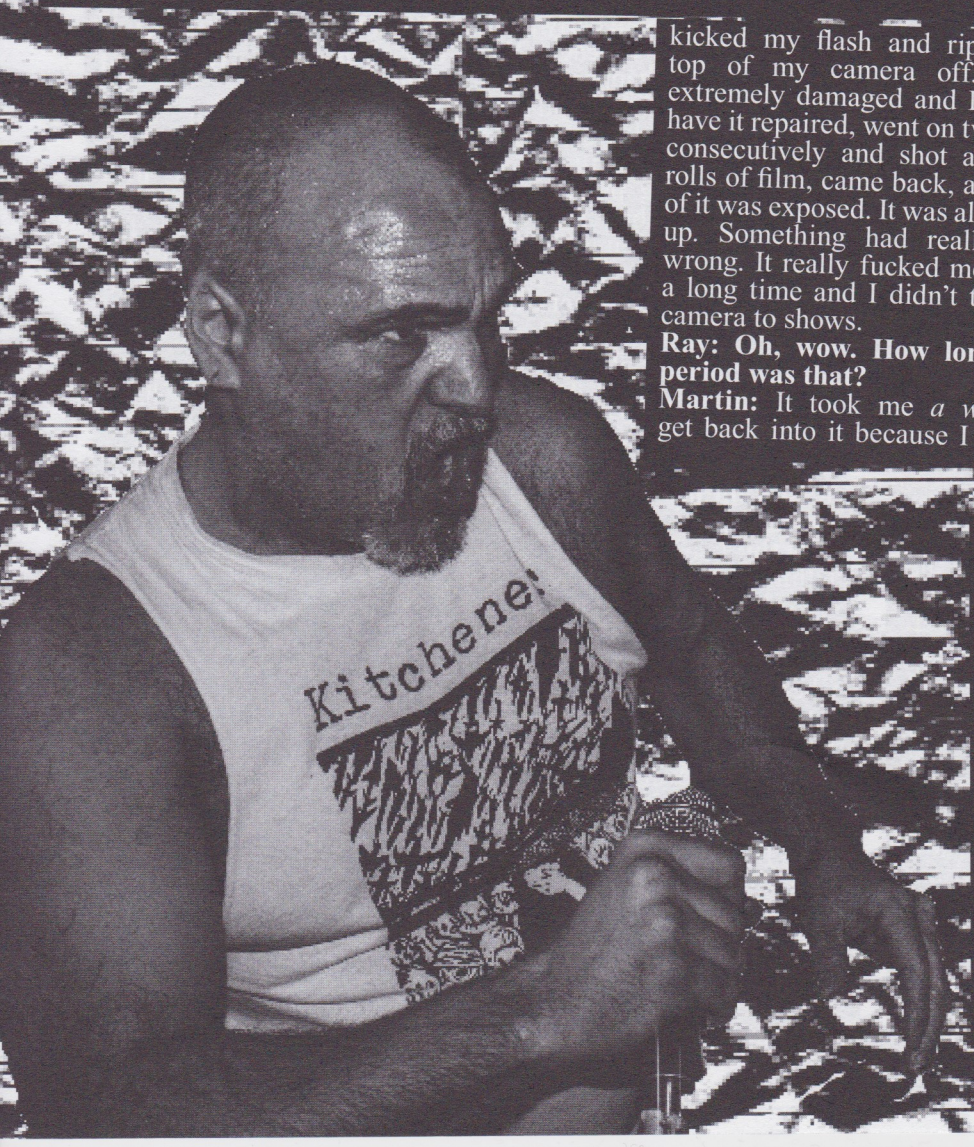
Ray: I see you at shows now in cramped bars, or living rooms in Oakland, and I think, "Oh my god! I would never take my backpack there." Let alone a piece of equipment!

Martin: [laughs] I know! There are still moments when I think, "Should I even have this thing out right now?" But, you know, I like to capture those moments.

Ray: Do you ever feel that because you're a photographer, and you have that mental space that you go into, that you ever find yourself...

Martin: Not being able to enjoy the show? It happens sometimes. There are moments, and people have seen it, and it's not terribly often, where I'll seriously put the camera down and do a stage dive and go crazy.

Ray: I think it was at the Big Zit show a few months ago where you were taking pictures up till the very end, and they announced their last song and you put your camera away and just ran into the pit.



Martin: [laughter] Did I?!

Ray: It was like, the last 45 seconds.

Martin: Actually, you know what's weird about that? It wasn't that show, because I *didn't* take my camera to that show... but I jumped in and danced because I was like, "I gotta get into this!" But that was because I'm more afraid of traveling on public transportation with my gear versus being at a punk show.

Ray: That makes sense.

Martin: So that show I did dance [laughs], but I didn't take the camera. So there are moments where I don't want to. I remember seeing Destino Final various times, and I photographed them a couple times, so when they came back and played at Submission I said, "I'm. Not. Taking. My. Camera." And I just went crazy.

Ray: Did you still have moments at shows where you thought, "Ugggghhhh!!!"

Martin: Like, that would have made a great picture? I mean that happens. It's when I don't take my camera. When Big Zit played that show there were multiple moments when I was like, "Arrrrghh!" It's painful for me, because I'm seeing what is happening and thinking, "*That* would have made an amazing photo, and I fucking don't have my camera with me!" So yeah, that happens to me all the time. And not just at shows. I'll be walking down the street and think, "I wish I had my camera with me right now."

Ray: How often do you just carry your camera around? Are you one of those photographers that's like...

Martin: A street photographer?

Ray: Or just like, "Today I will take pictures. Tuesday, I will take pictures."

Martin: It's more when I travel, not when I'm home. I'll go walking somewhere when I'm traveling and do a lot of street photography. Usually when I'm at home... I think that when you're in the place that you live in, sometimes you get bored with what you see all the time. It becomes so ordinary that there's nothing special about it. But when somebody were to actually see it that's not from here they'd be like, "Where is this?!"

Ray: Definitely. There's this new photozine I've seen around at a couple of stores called *Tenderloin*. It's just something like 18 pages, all street photography, and it's mostly cityscapes. I go down to that neighborhood all the time, and that zine doesn't feel like San Francisco. It doesn't feel like the city that I live in. But I would never think to take a camera there.

Martin: Yeah. Exactly.

Ray: So I got a question I've always wanted to ask you... So Crudos was a pretty established band, and I've read in other interviews that you were out to other guys in the band before you were to most people in the punk scene.

Martin: Mmmhmmm.

Ray: What was it like being in such a high profile band and coming out? Was there any kind of backlash?

Martin: Umm...

Ray: Because with Chicago it seems to me that there is very little middle ground with a lot of issues, not just that...

Martin: Yeah.

Ray: It's either, "Fuck yeah!" or "Fuck you!"

Martin: Yeah, yeah. You know, it took me a little bit of time to actually be more public about my sexuality. The nature of Los Crudos was that it was a band that, you know, took a political stance on political stuff. It took a stance in general. And one day I was like, "You know what, this is a part of me, and at some point it's going to come up." And I think that because of left politics there was a homophobia that existed within that world. I think in politics in general – you always see some politician that's super closeted, or whatever. I didn't want to have a closet life. To me that was really disturbing. And I thought that people's supposed "careers" were ruined over trying to hide shit from people, and I just thought, "I don't want to be one of those fucking people." That's just weird to me. I mean, there's a part of me that also realized that in order to start having people think about things a little bit more was to present new ideas and different ideas.

Ray: So you thought about it as a public platform to an extent?

Martin: Uhhhhhh... No? It was a very personal sort of platform, but then at some point it was coming to the surface.

Ray: Where there questions? Like in the punk community?

Martin: No. It was me. It was me constantly questioning myself. And I think that I was sort of challenging myself with changes that were happening to me, because this was also sort of new territory for me. At first I wasn't 100% sure, I was having mixed feelings... was this a real thing? And obviously at some point it was a very real thing. So instead of doing what I think some punks would do when they came to terms with their homosexuality, where they left punk to go live a very different life, or leave something behind... I never was a fan of leaving behind, or trading off one thing for another. That's why I find a way to make all sorts of things happen for me in my life, because it's not about leaving.

Ray: An either/or.

Martin: No, no, no. It's just another part of you, or me.

Ray: That's interesting to hear, because with Limpwrist being such an out, proud, loud, "Fuck you!" band, and being someone younger who's just gotten to really know you in the past year or so, it's cool, and refreshing, to hear that you always haven't been, "I know what's going on." There's definitely a public idea of who you are based on your art, and Limpwrist gives the impression that you've always been super-confident about this shit, and "Fuck you."

Martin: Yeah, yeah. But I mean no... It's like anybody coming to an idea that's totally new to them and their life. You gotta start somewhere.

Ray: Crudos and Limpwrist have parallels in their politics of being very socially aware bands and addressing topics. Limpwrist just seems to have a much larger sense of humor than Crudos.

Martin: Yeah.

Ray: Was that a conscious decision? Were you tired of having to be stern about everything?

Martin: Yeah. I think that's what happened. There was a period where I wanted to something a little more fun, still maintaining the ideals, but the delivery was way different. I wanted to do a show, finish a show, and finish a set and come off and be able to smile and laugh – and I had not done that. So that for me was really huge. There are so many different ways of making a point, of getting a message across to people, and humor was one that I wasn't used to. So for me it was important to take that approach as opposed to a very serious take on serious things. Some people thought it was going to be very serious and it's, "No. I don't want to do that." Like this sort of downer kind of thing. No way. I'm a happy guy. Being gay, for me, is a good thing. I was able to smile about it and laugh about it. And in the meantime I think that so much of the hardcore scene is so serious that Limpwrist found the opportunity to poke at it – with our name and satire

and all of that.

Ray: There was a lot of talk about the Limpwrist set at Fed Up Fest. There was some controversy around the promoters' decision to not really publicize that.

Martin: I guess I don't know all the controversy...

Ray: Apparently some people didn't want Limpwrist to be promoted because they didn't want a lot of straight, white dudes – hardcore dudes – coming just to see Limpwrist. While others were like, "These are the people we want to talk to, and all you're doing is making it very exclusionary and insular."

Martin: Well, all I can say really about that decision to play that is that after we had done it, as a band, we decided that we will never play a show that has an exclusionary policy. Because that really isn't what Limpwrist is about. We did it because we understood that it was these kids' first time doing the fest and we were like, "Oh! Let's support that." In part we agreed to do something, and we stuck to our guns with it. I think there were some comments made from people who might have had their hand in organizing – or just that crew of people – that talked about the bros that did come. That's where we got a little offended because we weren't sure who they were talking about. Because there were people who came to see us that got invited that day, who weren't bros, number one, and they weren't... basically they were *our* people. When comments and criticisms are going out blindly, being funneled out like that, I'm just like, "Well, *who the fuck are you talking about*? These are people who are from that side of town. These are our people. I hope you're not talking about them." It was just a really weird thing. But I think that after that it was decided that if we ever get asked to do a show we need to make sure that there's no policy about how it's just for this type of person, or that type of person, because it really is not when Limpwrist is involved.

Ray: That makes sense.

Martin: I just want to say that I'm glad that fest happened. It was a cool first attempt, and I think that if they were to continue to do something like that it would become even better than what they did.

Ray: Definitely. When I was over at *Maximum* we made sure to try to get a piece in there beforehand to help promote it. It was some people who are involved with the Black and Brown Fest who also wanted a more queer/trans* orientated one – which for Chicago is exactly what Chicago needs right now.

Martin: It's huge! That's a big deal! There was never such a thing in the past.

Ray: Limpwrist has people all over the country. Was it always like that?

Martin: Yeah. Well, Los Crudos has people all over the country now, but Limpwrist was always like that. When we started I was living in Chicago. Our meeting point was

Philadelphia – there were two people in Philly, one in upstate New York. At our first practices we wrote our first songs, our first demo. We played our first show in Philly. So we're kind of a weird Philly band, which is strange. People who were around remember that. But we've lived all over the place.

Ray: I think you mentioned to me when Limpwrist played here in San Francisco over Pride weekend that you guys have got some new stuff that you're working on?

Martin: Yeah, were working on a new 12".

Ray: Are you going to tour on that?

Martin: I don't know. We never know if we're going to tour. It's really hard because we're not a localized band all living in one place. And we're a little older, so it's always tricky with people's jobs or careers, or whatever. Can they take off to do a legitimate tour? I haven't done a drive around the country tour since Crudos days. Limpwrist has only done the coasts. So probably no real full on tour.

Ray: So when did you move to California?

Martin: I got here... I left Chicago a little over 14 years ago.

Ray: You didn't move straight to San Francisco, did you?

Martin: I did Southern California. I was in Orange County for five years and then moved here after that.

Ray: And you moved here to do the distro?

Martin: To do *Maximum Rocknroll*, yeah.

Ray: So at that point you're doing Lengua Armada, you're doing Limpwrist, you're still taking tons of photos and doing your photo zine... why add another thankless, grinding job?

Martin: [laughter] I guess it's what I do? I don't know. I mean, there was a lot happening when I was in Southern California - I was in a relationship that was coming to an end. I was thinking about leaving Chicago, moved to California for this person, things didn't work out after five years and had to make some decisions. Should I move back to Chicago? And this opportunity basically came out of nowhere - "Do you want to work for *Maximum* doing distro?" I came up here and interviewed, it was around this time actually – it was November. I interviewed and they were interested in having me come out. The timing of it all was truly perfect and I just jumped on it and came out here.

Ray: How long did you do that for?

Martin: I distro'd for a few years.

I don't know... maybe three or four years? It was a little while.

Ray: So you've always been living in this neighborhood.

Martin: Yeah. I've never left. If I leave it'll be leaving for good, with the way things are in San Francisco.

Ray: There's really nowhere to move anymore.

Martin: Nope.

Ray: Talking about *Maximum*... They're releasing the Los Crudos discography on vinyl [Sorry folks. It came and went. Snooze = Looze. - Ray]. I was wondering what was going on with Crudos? You guys stopped doing shows, got back together for that Latino Fest in Chicago that Southkore helped do, which was almost 10 years ago now...

Martin: It's really been that long?

Ray: It was '05 or '06.

Martin: Oh yeah. Wow.

Ray: Then you guys did a Chaos in Tejas, and then there was nothing for a while. But now you've recently been playing handfuls of shows, did a tour of Spain... Is that band still going? How does Los Crudos work?

Martin: What happened was... The reason we kinda came back, the catalyst to bring this back together, was behind a friend of mine who called me up and asked if we would play a benefit for Sarah Kirsch. That's where it all started. When this idea came up I was sitting there in some restaurant in Oakland, and she talked to me about it, and it wasn't like I even had to think about it. I was like, "Yeah. Absolutely. I will bring Crudos back together to do a show for Sarah Kirsch." On the spot I called everybody, and everybody said yes. So that was what got that ball rolling again, and when that happened the guys asked, "Why don't we play a few other things?" It just went from there.

Ray: Is there any new music? Any talks of that?

Martin: You know, we started to. We started to write what might become a new 7". But again, I'm really fickle about that. It has to be *fucking good*. Los Crudos can't put out a new 7" and it's terrible. So we're working on it, but who knows what's going to happen with that.

Ray: So would you say that you have a life outside of punk? Because you do so much, all the time, in so many different capacities.

Martin: I would say I have a life and a lot of it is involved in punk, but not all of it. My partner is not a punk. We don't do punk things together. We don't go dumpster diving [laugher]. But punk is clearly a massive thing in my life. I always used to fear of my life being too punk, and I don't know if I really worry about that anymore. I don't even think about it. It just is. And I'm okay with that.

Ray: Besides all the contributions you make to punk actively, you're also known as a serious record collector.

Martin: Well... I don't know...

Ray: A couple months ago you were selling off some records on Facebook and people were commenting things like, "Are you okay?!"

Martin: [laughter]

Ray: The fact that you were selling off these records had people asking, "Are you sick?! What's wrong?!"

Martin: They were waiting for the announcement of illness, or that I'm dying [laughter]. I realized after I posted that I should have written something because I did get these really concerned messages from old friends. I had to be like, "I am completely fine and healthy. I'm just letting go of some stuff." I realized because of the reputation...I just want to say, for the record, I am not a record collector – I am a freak for punk. Therefore, for years, I have been purchasing records and all this stuff. I love my music, and I love punk music, but I don't associate too much with heavy duty record collectors because I'm really put off by the "I collect rare records because people will pay for them," versus buying because you like it. So I don't collect rare soul 45s, I don't collect rare jazz records, I don't collect rare house records. I collect punk, and it's because I love punk. I think that over the years, as I was growing up, I was getting stuff for dirt cheap. When you're buying stuff in the mid-'80s there were these waves of people leaving punk, thinking it's done, it's dead, you're basically picking up what they thought was garbage. After a while you end up with a fucking pretty solid collection. But I've been letting go. I've reduced a collection of what was about 12,000 punk records to a couple thousand.

Ray: I also know that you collect flyers as well.

Martin: I do. Punk flyers. Again, I don't give a fuck about the Beatles, and I'm not gonna collect Beatles shit. I collect punk. The flyers seemed like a natural sort of progression for me to get into because I love the art, and the art associated with punk – and sometimes the lack of art, because it's so crude, some of it. I dig it. My want list had become really slim as far as records I was still looking for, and I like punk art so I'm definitely into flyers. But not just old school classic stuff, new flyers and bands that are around right now. There are certain people whose flyers I really like, and I'll collect their flyers. I just like the fact that people are putting the effort to make a flyer and produce as opposed

to just everything being a .jpg. You know, I'm just not into that. It's good to get information out – the internet serves that purpose – but a huge part of punk's impact are the graphics associated with it. Chances were a lot of us saw a certain band logo before we ever saw a band.

Ray: Oh, definitely.

Martin: So I think that carries a lot of weight and it seems really lazy to me that people won't go make a flyer.

Ray: I love how you're saying that while surrounded by screenprinting gear. You're so very serious about it.

Martin: I am! I really like flyers. I do.

Ray: You just purchased this pretty heavy duty screenprinting stuff...

Martin: Yeah... I really have to start putting it to use.

Ray: Are you getting into doing posters?

Martin: I want to. I just did a little poster thing. Don Pyle had a string of photo shows up in the Northwest, and he had this poster that was one of his photographs of a band, and basically he needed text put on it. So Scott and I put text over this image just to make this nice poster for his photo show. I'm going to do a series of shirts that are small runs of photographs that I have done, where it's just editions of 40.

Ray: You just put out some new records via Lengua Armada. What was the first record? Was it the *Fungus Among Us* comp?

Martin: *Fungus Among Us* was the first record I ever did. The second one was called *Built On Blood.*

Ray: I've never heard of that one.

Martin: It's an LP and a 7" that had tons of bands on it. Somewhere I saw a copy for like $20, $25 on a wall. I was like, "Whoa. I put that out."

Ray: I remember I walked into – and this was years ago – Reckless Records in Wicker Park, and they had the Crudos LP, and it was like $50. And next to it was this little note that said something like, "Yes. Crudos records are now worth $50."

Martin: [laughter]

Ray: Do you feel weird about that at all?

Martin: No. No I don't. You're talking to a person who buys music, buys records. So I know that Crass records say pay no more than whatever pounds on the record, but if you find a first pressing of *The Feeding of the 5000* you're not gonna pay the fucking equivalent of three pounds for it. I'm sorry, it's not happening. Times change, man. If you're gonna throw that in somebody's face just don't buy it. You can get the music. The music's available. It's not like the music is in the hands of people who'll never let you have it, the music is accessible. The first pressings of the singles – I'm not going to keep repressing them. It had its time and it's done, you know? That's just the nature of everything. You probably had the chance to buy it – not if you're really young – and it was at your fingertips, you had the chance. It's like me not buying all the Pettibon zines I used to see at Wax Trax! Records for two dollars. I could have fucking bought a ton and I didn't, you know? They go for a lot of fucking money now. Oh well. My bad. [laughter]

Ray: So you don't do represses for Lengua Armada?

Martin: I do. It just depends on what it is. In the '90s you could sell 2000 copies of anything – pretty quickly. There were that many people buying records that you could sell 2000 of something, no fucking problem. That's why records were way cheap too, because when you're talking about selling 2000 of anything your cost drops so drastically. Nowadays you're lucky if you can sell... I have another, maybe, 400 of the Alerta Roja LP sitting here. I made 1000 thinking, "Oh, well I'm sure people will be into it." It's a very different climate. So I will never repress this [holds up Alerta Roja LP], you just gotta ask if I have any left. But there are certain things... I sold out of that S.H.I.T. 7" so I will be pressing 500 more – but that's generally it.

Ray: You're not looking far back?

Martin: No. There's no need for that.

Ray: What bands are you really into right now?

Martin: Oh man... that's a good question. I love S.H.I.T. I just saw them again in Cleveland and they were great. Big Zit blew my fucking mind again. I love Dawn of Humans. I just think they're an amazing band in the sense that there are all these really interesting elements together, like performance art. There's something really awesome about that. There's a lot of really young bands that I'm trying to think of that are really fucking good right now...

Ray: Why do you think punk is still relevant in 2014?

Martin: It's still relevant to me because I'm still excited by the young energy, and the music. Some of the young bands, I just like what they're doing. I stick around because of that. I don't stick around because I still like Minor Threat. That's not why I'm still a fucking punk. That's gone. That's *long* gone. I stick around in punk because there are a bunch of new kids doing cool stuff that I'm into. That's why it's relevant. Even though I'm an older punk nobody could dispute that I support new bands. I never stopped doing that, whether it was seeing early Screeching Weasel shows, or Bhopal Stiffs, or whoever. That to me is the equivalent of going to see a new band today. And I think that in a lot of people's minds, when they think back at these big name bands now... they weren't big name always. So for me it seems the same, in the sense that I see the connection to all that. I don't care what a lot of older punks think about what kids are doing today. They've moved on. I don't know why people keep asking them - who fucking cares? I'm into it. I'm into art and I'm into music and I'm into new shit. I love old stuff, just like anybody else, but it wasn't because of whatever record from 30 years ago made *that* huge of an impact in my life that I'm just hanging in there and hoping that it comes back. That's just ridiculous to me. I like going to shows, you know, the whole thing.

Ray: What other projects are you working, that you have coming out, that aren't tied to music?

Martin: I have another photo book coming out... but it's tied to music [laughter]. It's coming out in South America.

Ray: Is it only going to be in South America?

Martin: It's a South American release, yeah. All newer stuff. So there's that... everything's actually kind music related, so I'll just stick with that. I've got records that I'm putting out – the last Gas Rag record. That's another band that was fucking great, but they just broke up. I have a Big Zit single coming out. A Kromosom/ Nomad split [ed. Note – It's out now!], maybe a couple other reissues of South American bands. I began to write a little bit here and there. I hope I can just sit down and write more at some point – I've got some short stories I want to write. There's always something up my sleeve [laughter].

Ray: Last question... What is something that you know, yourself, to be 100% true, but that most people disagree with?

Martin: Sex is really important [laughter]. People say that it's not the only thing, and that it's not the important thing in a relationship. I completely disagree [laughter].

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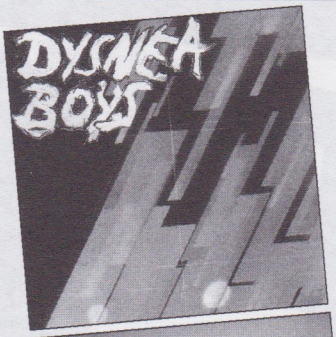

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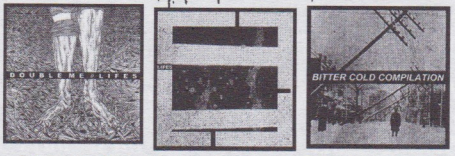

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PORK

I first came across a copy of Pork at St. Louis' much missed Apop Records. There was a huge stack of them sitting next to the door, so I took a couple issues home with me and stuck them next to the toilet, getting around to reading them whenever nature told me to. I liked some of the content and appreciated it's throwback, Americana/back of a comic book vibe. It was definitely more Mad than MRR. But one thing I noticed really rubbed me the wrong way - merch with fascist imagery on it. I mean, like straight up buttons with only a swastika on them. No context, nothing. So it kinda confused me, especially since it was coming from the Pacific Northwest, which has a rather storied history of white power boneheads. Since Pork wasn't really available in my small town, I didn't pick up another issue again until I moved to San Francisco.

The first time I ever talked with Sean Äaberg was as a coordinator of Maximum Rocknroll. Let's just say that the politics of those two magazines don't always jive, and that some people at MRR were upset about the zine running a piece online about Pork. Myself included. The interview was put up without anyone really checking into it, and we had a debate as to whether or not to pull the feature or to leave it up and make a note about it. I figured, what's done is done. So we made the note, and in the comments section Sean and I debated the politics of violent aesthetics in punk while making references to people like Madam Blavatsky and Susan Sontag - the whole exchange is still up on the MRR website. We both, in my opinion, walked away from the whole thing still completely disagreeing, but respecting the fact that two punks with opposing political viewpoints could actually be civil, and even friendly, about controversial and heated stuff.

What I took away from that first encounter with Sean was that he definitely isn't a Nazi. He's just a shitstarter and take-no-shit motherfucker. While we'll never agree on everything, we definitely have more in common than not. And we definitely don't see eye to eye on a lot. But at the same time, from the moment I began talking about starting this zine, he was a huge supporter and constantly encouraging me to do it - because we weren't coming from the exact same place. This interview was one of the first one's I did specifically for No Friends. I wanted to interview Sean, about Pork, because I think that there are too many people right now trying to shut other people up. I'd much rather hear what someone has to say, let them say it, and if I don't like it, walk away - or sock them in the face. The point is I don't ever want to tell people what they should or shouldn't think or say. And this zine is very much about that. About presenting different ideas and thoughts and letting you decide on your own what you think . So here's Sean, in his own words.

Interview and intro by Ray Martinez. Art by Sean Äaberg. Check out his stuff at goblinkomegamall.com

You're a pretty controversial person these days in punk. In fact, you're probably the one person I see people shit on, consistently, the most. People love to hate you and Pork. How do you feel about being the undisputed heel of punk rock these days?

You're hanging out with the wrong people! I'm only a heel to the fuckin' uptight, yuppie, square, pencil-necked, Commie, nerd Punks that have been created by *MRR*. Those guys cry in their quinoa if someone looks cross-eyed at them - they say its ableist! To everyone else, I'm the Ayatollah of RockaRolla, the Big Red Blitzkrieg running wild and showing that you can do it, even when everyone says you can't! The people's choice!

I do have to say though that a lot of the criticisms people have against you are pretty warranted. Selling Nazi themed shit these days isn't really something people want to see, or have going on. You constantly say that the majority of the people you sell this kind of stuff to aren't racist, or white supremacists. But seriously, how can you even make that claim? And are you willing to do something about it if/when some white power boneheads start joining the Pork Army?

You're like a naive art teacher lady telling me in school, "Why can't you draw something nice?" People dig what we do, we are very successful. There is a small, select part of society who doesn't like what we're doing and they just don't get it. Personally, I've never heard anyone say anything positive about nerd critics—that's why they hide in their apartments throwing slings and arrows from the safety of their computer. When I was a kid and briefly trying to conform to the *MRR* rules, I bought into the idea of Nazi punks and Neo-Nazis being a threat and stuff, but then I actually started to look around me and there were no Nazi nobodies. I think I met one Nazi at a bus depot in Columbus, Ohio when I was drumming for A//Political and trying to get laid at this Witch's Ball and he was saying I was brave to wear red laces, which I thought meant I was an anarcho syndicalist, but he thought they meant I was a Nazi. As far as who buys our stuff, I mean sure, who knows who is buying our stuff. Oh wait, we know, because we take the orders and see who is ordering. We have a lot of Mexican Rockers buying our stuff and a lot of girls with big hair and a lot of long-haired dudes who smoke weed. If Nazis join the *Pork* Army, that's fine with me; we're winning them over, Blacks, Whites,

bunch of uptight, Commie nerds think I shouldn't be doing it? Please. I burnt out on the punk scene when I was 22 and dropped out. I worked at the Oakland Public Library for a while and then I read Gene Simmons' autobiography while I was supposed to be working one evening and was so struck by how much I was on the wrong path by working a straight job and wearing quiet clothing that I quit the next day. I also read Sammy Davis Jr.'s autobiography at about the same time and it had a similar effect on me, in that he just went for what he felt was right and what he had to do, fuck everyone else. The *Pork* logo isn't supposed to be shocking. Porku is a leather-daddy pig. There's a couple of Japanese weekly manga collections, one of which has a pirate pig as a logo and another one always uses leather daddy stuff in a cute way and I wanted *Pork* to evoke that. It's only shocking if you're looking to be offended by certain imagery: if you don't give a fuck, it's funny.

Playing with such imagery as you do it seems inevitable that you're gonna bring out the crazies on both sides of the spectrum. Do you ever worry that you're eventually gonna have to deal with a threat to the safety of your family from either genuine fascists or militant radicals?

I just don't have this chicken-shit demeanor. I might upset someone, someone might be crazy. What if Nazis buy my shit? I don't know man. If you step out the door you're going to be in some kind of danger. I grew up in Oakland. I'd ride the bus from East Oakland to Gilman St. looking like a punk pro-wrestler, I'd have groups of 12 kids wanting to fight me, people throwing shit at me from cars, people spitting on me, the whole nine yards. People fuck with you no matter what. If you're famous, people will make up reasons to hate you. This is why I have an army. As far as actual fascists - you mean like the ones that have run our government since Kennedy was killed? These little subcultural activist twerps are chicken-shit cowards; none of them have even *said* shit to me. When it comes down to it, they know they're just a bunch of control-freak babies going after an easy target. The reason why they hate *Pork* is because their friends like it, it's more popular than their shit, it's invading their space and it's breaking all the rules and they want it out of there so they can continue to be simpletons who are trying to force other people to follow their rules, so they can go back to spreading tofu dip on their bagel chips. They've got no currency and they can fuck off.

Getting off the politics for a little bit, tell me a little about your history with zines. I remember you mentioning once that you were suspended from high school a couple of times for your zines. When did you start making them? What kind of zines were you into before you started Pork?

I started doing zines when I was 12 when I discovered The Church of the Subgenius and *Factsheet Five* at this store called Dark Carnival. Danny Shoup's (*Pork*'s Archaeopop writer) parents had just got a photocopier for their home archaeology business and that sealed the deal. I had already been drawing and publishing my own comix to sell at school when I was in 4th grade. The first zine I did was *Goblin's Armpit* which ran from 1988 to 1998. I was mostly inspired by *Sniffin' Glue* at the start and was obsessed with the Sex Pistols and the Ramones, and it developed into a very idiosyncratic "Medieval Punk" zine which true heads recognize as one of the best zines ever. Seriously. Ask around. I met my wife Katie who is the other half of the *Pork* Empire through zines, we were the only kids doing zines in the East Bay at that point (hard to believe but true) and she sent me fan mail saying she wanted to have my babies. Now we have three sons together. After *Goblin's Armpit* me and Katie worked on a futurist zine called *Go!* and a comic called *PIPU*. Then we helped form Nonchalance/Oaklandish with Jeff Hull and I did the *Oakslander* zine with him. We did another zine called *Orange*, then I did two zines that were re-exploring the *Goblin's Armpit* world called *Binocular Rebellious* and *The Goblin*. I co-founded a weekly newspaper in Eugene called *Bang!* which I quit and then me and Katie launched *Pork* in 2011.

Pork definitely has a culture vibe to it more so than anything else. By that I mean it seems like you're actively trying to create a Pork scene. There seems to be a bit of Turbonegro's Turbojugend, and the particularly defined aesthetics of other magazines like Low Rider, mixed with the back of comic book/'70s rock fanclub. Do you see Pork as something that transcends the zine? What exactly are you trying to do here?

Yeah, that's about right. *Pork* is about the big tent, grinding all of America's Rock'n'Roll subcultures, trash culture, Browns, Yellows, Blues, Christians, Jews, Muslims, Democrats, whoever; I'll take any of those sinners and we'll turn them into freedom-loving, rule-breaking party maniacs! Everyone deserves another chance and again, who am I to judge? I could give a fuck.

What really surprised me about you is that you're an older dude with a family. Not to be rude, but I assumed that the guy drawing the Porky Pig with an SS hat would have been a younger punk that didn't know any better. But you're definitely well past your shock-for-the-sake-of-shock phase.

If people are shocked by a pig wearing an SS hat, that's their problem. It's not supposed to be shocking—what the fuck? Do you hang out with retards? Think about the judgment of , "Didn't know any better…" I am a self-actualized person, I'm doing exactly what I want to, my family is doing exactly what we want to, we're happy, and we make a living off of what we want to make a living off of. This is the actual American dream we're living here. Should I quit that because a

fringe culture and everything into one big fucking sausage and smokin' that mother until it's one cohesive unit. I stopped recognizing the lines between things and look for the commonality and just smashed them together. The magazine is about the real soul of America, the place that birthed the New York Dolls and *Screw* magazine and myself. It's a dirty place where you see all kinds of weird and nasty shit, where the girls chew gum suggestively while smoking, beat people up and don't wear bras, and rats smoke dope while reading violent gay porno novels behind Chinese restaurants. I want freedom, I want people to make stuff that isn't so fucking guarded and precious and uptight, I want people to be able to experience the enormous breadth of existence and not shut themselves off from things because they're convinced they have to stick to some ludicrously narrow range of interests; or like their absurd, Polly-Annaish fucking politics and morality keep them from eating live squid or taking it up the butt or being a Matador. I'm all about the *go for it*.

You seem to sell a lot of stuff via Pork that isn't necessarily Pork branded. Most zines just sell shirts with a cool design with their name or logo on it. To be honest, it's a little commercial for my taste, but then again you also give away your magazine. How does it all fit together?

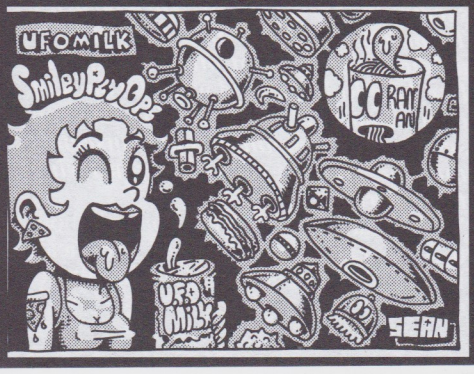
This is a *big picture project*. When I was eight or something, my friend's parents gave me a huge box of '60s and '70s kiddie comics, stuff like *Richie Rich*, *Hot Stuff*, *Archie*, *Porky Pig*, *Mighty Mouse* and *Donald Duck*, the stuff the Ramones wore on their t-shirts. The comics were terrible, but were great *pop art*, but the real shit was the ads in the back. The ads were selling monkeys, switchblades, Boonesfarm t-shirts, Nazi medallions, alligators, lucky rabbit's feet and hustling some money-making scheme magazine called *Grit*. I loved that these stupid kid's comics had the craziest ads in the backs and immediately understood this as what I was about. The Johnson Smith catalog, selling whoopee cushions, hand buzzers, vibrators and biker patches to whoever the fuck. As I grew up and started exploring other weird magazines and marginal publications, this world just grew and grew, all these weird mail-order companies in New Jersey and Florida selling studded leather and fake weed, dirty books and psychedelic posters, it was a calling! I just answered the call. One day we're going to open a shopping mall.

Back to the politics, cause you know I'm gonna... You had your online store shut down because of some of the merch that you sold. By what I read on the internet it seemed to be the Nazi related stuff that people are always complaining about, but I'm not exactly sure if that's right. You mind talking a little bit about what happened between Pork and Bigcartel?

Some tight-assed loser went on an email binge to as many of our connected associates as possible and Bigcartel was one of them. They made a bunch of claims, including that they were gonna get the ADL on us, which is hilarious because *Pork* is a Jew-run company, and all we got to say about Jews is how much we like guys like Abby Hoffman, Ralph Bakshi, Al Goldstein, Bill Gaines, Allen Ginsberg and Malcolm McLaren - and I can cook a better matzo ball or latke than anyone I know, but anyhow - Bigcartel got scared and dumped us like yesterday's garbage. They have a clause in their contract about the Bigcartel community not selling offensive or hateful products, and there you go. We signed the contract; we got dumped because they're chicken shits. We were actually able to argue about the "hate" part because as I've explained a thousand times, we don't use the swastika as a hate symbol. So they got us on the offensive part, which is totally subjective and sure, we love to offend so there you go. Oh well! Fuck 'em and good riddance! Reader be warned, Bigcartel can dump you for upsetting the community too!

In issue 15 there are a couple of editorials/columns that I want to ask you about. There doesn't seem to be a credit, so I'm assuming they're attributed to you. They're under the "Felony Flats Neighborhood Association" header. There are two pieces there, one titled "Race War" which comes off as the sarcastic political rantings of a not-quite-sober-not-quite-shitfaced carnival barker or '70s NYC 42nd St. sleaze peddler. Total heel shtick. But the second piece, "White People," kind of made me a bit uncomfortable, and I'd like to ask you about it. There is a definite genuineness and honesty to the writing - it does take a lot to admit that being fucked with for being white in a primarily black neighborhood/city (Oakland) has made you skittish around people of color. But you say that you're lucky that you never "turned too racist." I mean, that's a kinda weird fucking thing to say. What exactly do you mean by that? There's another thing in there that kind of took me by surprise. You talk about living in Oakland when the Rodney King riots happened and that you got a lot of shit. Your statement though, that "Now there's some videos of five Black guys kicking a White guys ass. Guess we're even" seems really ignorant of the larger problems of race relations, especially in light of the Rodney King beating trial. Do you actually think we live in a post-racial society where things are evening out for whites and people of color? Now, I don't mean to come off as condescending with this next bit, so bear with me. Personally, based on our interactions and conversations via correspondence I don't think you're a Nazi. I also don't think that you're some kind of fascist or card carrying bigot. But, honestly, can you see why there are a lot of people who think you might be? Does that ever worry or bother you?

Well first, that's Bobby Madness' column so you can talk to him about what he meant in it ***(ed. note - Fucking fair enough, Sean! - Ray)***, but I stand by the *Pork* crew and don't censor them ever, or even say stuff like "The columnists in *Pork* don't represent *Pork* and are just writing their columns so lighten up." But sure, Bobby's columns make people uncomfortable and that's one of the reasons why I run them - I love Bobby Madness and his comix and writing. We live and run *Pork* out of the most non-white, non-yuppie neighborhood in Porkland because that's what we're comfortable around. There's nothing but Chinese, Vietnamese, Blacks, Mexicans and Russians around us. I could give a fuck about people's race. I don't think we live in a post-racial society and I don't think that's possible or desirable. In America, it shouldn't matter. You can be as racial or as non-racial as you want, I don't care. People can be and do whatever they want, again, I don't care. It's not my world; I was just born in it. People have different positions in society, again, I don't care, I didn't make this world and I didn't sign onto anything that has happened in the past, the present, or the future. If people wanna think XYZ about me, that's their fucking deal. I could give a fuck. Growing up in Oakland was crazy, but it was also very good. I grew up recognizing that the Black folks in Oakland were cooler than the White folks and this just got more exaggerated as the '80s rolled on. Yuppies are really square and the yuppie thing pushed on everyone



even or especially the punks. I liked that Black folks broke the rules as a constant fuck you to White society, everything from how they spoke, how they crossed the street, how they reacted to things around them, how they drove, how loud their music was, it was just much cooler. I loved how Black kids would intentionally say things to upset White teachers just to watch them go crazy. The do-gooder white teachers who just wanted to educate the poor black kids so that they could make the "right" decisions, just total systemic condescension and full of yourself nonsense. Anyhow, having left the tiny egg of Oakland and seen the country, I've seen the White working class do this to condescending systemic people also, and that they've got a whole way of being loud, unruly, rude and crazy that is the same kind of swagger I admired in Black folks as a kid. This is what I am about and this is what *Pork* is about. Don't think you've got the authority to tell me what to do, or judge me, because you don't, so fuck you and fuck off!

Let's get past the political discussion for a moment. Besides being a fanzine editor, you're also a pretty established artist. Your style definitely evokes some '6Os/'7Os counter-culture underground comix. What drew you to this style, and what are the bigger influences - both obvious and not - when it comes to your art?

The first comic books I read as a kid were *Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers*, then *POGO* and *Mad* magazine. It's the same stuff that always gets me, taking the piss out of everything, the fucked up details, naked ladies running around, used condoms on the ground, lines of cocaine, dog shit, pop characters hidden in the group shots, lots of references, lots of rude jokes, lots of dumb shit to look at, lots of smart criticism of how stupid society is. I hate being bored and I'm always looking for something funny and I like stuff that upsets the hall monitors. Graffiti, litter, fireworks, drinking in public, breaking the rules, breaking glass, upsetting the lawmen. As far as influences go, there are the obvious ones like S. Clay Wilson, Robert Crumb, Rick Griffin, Ed Roth, Robert Williams, but really, I just like weird drawings, I love Hieronymus Bosch, Pieter Bruegel and Albrecht Durer. I love Pedro Bell. Vaughn Bode. Ralph Bakshi movies. Shawn Kerri. Mad Marc Rude. Nick Blinko. John Blanche. Gary Chalk. Dave Trampier. Dennis Dread.

You've done a handful of record covers - the Ghoul 10" is a particularly rad one. I remember talking to Scott from Tank Crimes about it once at the MRR compound and he laughed, "Yeah, that Sean sure loves his swastikas." It seems that people who ask you for art probably know your material pretty well, but have you ever had anyone ask for art only to later reject it for some reason, whatever it may be?

First off, let me address something. The swastika deal, this is like when certain people get exposed to music with swearing in it, which was usually punk or rap and they can't get past the word "fuck" or whatever. Get over it. Stop clutching your purse. Anyhow, the art thing has happened once! When *Pork* started, Voodoo Doughnuts was opening up their store in Eugene and they had me do a mural in their new bathroom and they also took out an ad in the first issue of *Pork*. So, *Pork* comes out and we put the magazine into their spots and they throw a fit about, wait, can you guess? The swastika on the cover! Ha ha. So they dump the magazines, paint over the mural without telling me and then deny taking out an ad in the magazine! It was a really lame move on their part and one I will never forgive them for, having shown their true, chickenshit colors. On the other hand, Sizzle Pie in Portland which also opened up a spot in Eugene has really stood by us and they are really great people and they make great pizza!

There are a few things about Pork that I definitely love. The photo comic strips are pretty rad. Yeah, there have been a few in the past that I really hated for political reasons, but as a whole I think the idea is really good and the whole presentation is great. Where'd you get the idea to do that? What's the process is writing them? And how do you go about setting them all up?

The Photo Funnies are a staple of comedy magazines going back to *National Lampoon*, but they were in punk magazines also, stuff like "The Legend of Nick Detroit" and that one where Joey Ramone and Debbie Harry get married but then she turns into Edith Massey. Me and Katie smoke a bunch of weed and draw a bunch of strips and write a bunch of jokes and if the shit sticks, it's a hit! Then Katie gets our models together and she directs and shoots them. Then I have to clean up the blood. We're going to produce TV shows as soon as we have the time and money, so doing photo comics is the cheap way of doing a TV show and also fits in with the magazine format.

Another thing I love is the wrestling column, something you'll see that I'm doing also in this zine. What do you think it is about pro wrestling that a lot of punks (especially punk dudes) are drawn too? Or do you think that there's something about pro wrestling that makes people later want to get into punk?

Yes, that's Jake Kelly's *RockandWrestling* column. There's not a lot of opportunities or venues for us to be, or see, people wearing crazy costumes, yelling, getting in fights, making a total scene, blowing people's minds and generally carrying on in front of a screaming crowd. This is common to both Wrestling and Rock'n'Roll. Put on a crazy costume, go on stage and give it all you got and die for what you love! Also, big, sweaty, yelling me!

Okay, lightning round. Answer quickly, but still explain yourself.

Harvey Kurtzman or Al Goldstein?

Al Goldstein, as much as I love *Mad,* and Kurtzman was an amazing editor, I have never been that interested in him or his work. Al Goldstein and his *Screw* magazine are like religious figures for me, and I love Goldstein's shtick. He had a giant middle finger statue on the grounds of his house, flipping off the world.

Tim Yohannan or Larry Flynt?

Tim Yo. I would kill to have a magazine around today like *Hustler* was in its prime, but in the long run, Tim Yo and *MRR* are very important to me, in a way that *Hustler* is not and I think that if I was older and had been in the scene when *MRR* was first coming together I coulda been one of those original geezers. I undoubtedly would have gotten too big for the *MRR* fishbowl and we woulda had one of those fights like he had with Jello Biafra or Jeff Bale or whoever else. Thankfully, I have my own magazine. I just have to be good to my wife.

KISS or Alice Cooper?

I am thinking about this too much. I can't choose. KISS because they put themselves on lunchboxes and were able to give the craziest, schlockiest RockandRoll to the kids and because they're a direct line to the New York Dolls and what a fucking coup! And Alice Cooper because he was on the Muppet Show and wrote "School's Out."

Jerry Lawler or Andy Kaufman?

Captain Lou Albano.

Portland Anarchist punks or Portland Drunk punks?

Every Anarcho Punk I've ever known has been a drunk fuck. You gotta get drunk. Every Punk should be an anarchist, not the Rik Mayall kind, but the kind that is a walking middle finger to all authority. So, in this, I refuse to choose and get down with the brews. But really, Punks need to recognize that they're Rockers and pull back a little bit from their subcultural niche and broaden out into the big Rockin' world.

TRANCE

Trance is a Mallorcan punk rock band that has, in just a few years of existence, meant a breath of fresh air on the old record players of many fans of a genre that can sometimes seem doomed to repeat the same exercise in style. A while back, Tere and Rafa Planas, Gato and Rafa Murillo launched themselves into composing simple, passionate songs, and performing them effectively in their energetic live shows. Today we speak with the drummer and the vocalist of the band to find out what they're up to these days.

Conversation by Fede of 1984 Radio zine.
Interview by Fede. English translation by Alix Carl. Photos provided by the band.

Fede: After your urgent first demo and your mature LP Maldición, tell us where Trance is; what projects are you absorbed in right now?

Gato: Right now we're putting out a new split 7" with the band Suicidas (Belgrado/Ruidosa Inmundicia) that will include two new songs from each band. We're also getting ourselves ready for a tour with Suicidas all over Europe for January of 2015. Meanwhile we're still writing new songs for a future LP.

Rafa Murillo: We're writing. After having recorded new songs we have a million ideas to develop. I would love to put out another record soon, if it could be an LP.

Fede: You recorded with Holy again, with great results. Talk to us about this producer and the dynamic you worked out.

Gato: Holy is a great sound technician, besides being a great friend. We've recorded the *Maldición* LP and these four latest songs with him; we're in love with the results since this latest recording was totally recorded and mixed in analog.

Rafa Murillo: Holy and family are a delight. Good friends and good musicians. We recorded at Holyrook, his house, and between him and Gato the mixes are done. Holy doesn't impose on you at

Fede: Después de vuestro urgente primer "demo" y vuestro maduro LP "Maldición", contadnos en qué momento se encuentra Trance, ¿en qué proyectos andáis sumergidos actualmente?

Gato: Ahora estamos por editar un nuevo 7" compartido con el grupo Suicidas (Belgrado/Ruidosa Inmundicia) que incluirá dos canciones nuevas de cada banda. También estamos organizándonos para hacer una gira con Suicidas por todo Europa para enero del 2015. Mientras tanto seguimos componiendo nuevas canciones para un futuro LP.

Rafa Murillo: Estamos componiendo. Después de haber grabado nuevas canciones tenemos infinidad de ideas por desarrollar. Me encantaría que sacáramos otro disco dentro de poco, si puede ser un LP.

Fede: Habéis vuelto a grabar con Holy y con un resultado de lo más eficaz. Habladnos de este productor y la dinámica de trabajo mediante la que habéis funcionado.

Gato: Holy es un gran técnico de sonido, además de un buen amigo, con él hemos grabado el LP *Maldición* y estas cuatro últimas canciones, estamos encantados con

all, he just advises you with really good judgment, and we've always had his support.

Fede: Your lyrics have some funny passages, almost adolescent, and some that are deeper, the kind that hit a nerve. What qualities does a story have to have to become a Trance song lyric?

Gato: For me, to be honest, it can't fall into political pamphleteering, and it has to represent us in some way. Of course we also like tales of the great beyond and robots, but our lyrics are never gonna be about the Nagasaki massacre, or bombs or mutilated people, to give you an example.

Rafa Murillo: It has to be partly true and partly fiction. I mean that you usually put in some of your lived experiences, but obviously it's not always like that. Some have sadness or nostalgia and some have humor, although at times it's black humor. And sometimes they have all that at once. The universal themes are inevitable: love, indifference and hate, life, death… I also like the fantastic theme just as much as introspection. At one time I thought I should pick one side or the other, "profundity" or "frivolity," but why? Life is made of both things.

Fede: What does a concert have to have for Trance to appear on the bill?

Gato: Nothing special, we play with any type of band; I mean any musical style. We usually find ourselves most comfortable playing shows put on by friends, it's always more honest. We've had bad experiences playing at a local club, and gotten ripped off, so now we really pay attention to who we're playing for. If it's for a good "Cause," we'll be there, but a lot of times the "Cause" can be the pockets of some businessman camouflaged as a friendly musician…

Rafa Murillo: We've had some disappointments and disagreements with organizers who don't know what it is to be in a band and who think only with their wallets and not with their hearts. Here there's a lot of the attitude that, since presumably you like to play, you can do it practically for free and when and how they want. All very bourgeois. So it's best when the musicians themselves organize it, and people who truly operate on DIY self-regulation principles.

Fede: Your sonic formula is influenced by classic punk rock, without turning your noses up at melodies and new wave influences. How is el resultado ya que esta última grabación esta toda registrada y mezclada en analógico.

Rafa Murillo: Holy y familia son un encanto. Buenos amigos y buenos rockeros. Hemos grabado en Holyrook, en su casa, y entre él y Gato han hecho las mezclas. Holy no te impone nada, sino que te aconseja con muy buen criterio y siempre hemos tenido su apoyo.

Fede: En vuestras letras encontramos algunos textos divertidos casi de aires adolescentes y otros más profundos, de los que te tocan la fibra ¿qué tiene que tener una historia para que se transforme en una letra de una canción de Trance?

Gato: Para mí, ser honesta, que no caiga en lo panfletario, y de alguna manera que nos represente, claro que también nos gustan las historias del más allá o de la robótica, pero nuestras letras jamás hablarán de la masacre de Nagasaki, ni de bombas ni de mutilados, por darte un ejemplo.

Rafa Murillo: Tiene que tener una parte de verdad y otra ficticia, quiero decir que a menudo pones algo de tus vivencias, pero obviamente no siempre es así. Algunas tienen tristeza o nostalgia y otras humor, aunque a veces sea humor negro. Y a veces tienen todo esto a la vez. Son inevitables los temas universales: el amor, el desamor y el odio, la vida, la muerte… También me gusta la temática fantástica tanto como la introspección. En un principio pensé que debería decantarme por un lado u otro, por la "profundidad" o por la "frivolidad", pero ¿por qué?
La vida está hecha de ambas cosas.

Fede: Que tiene que tener un concierto para que Trance aparezca en el cartel?

Gato: Nada en especial, nosotrxs tocamos con cualquier tipo de banda, me refiero al estilo musical. Solemos encontrarnos mas cómodos tocando en conciertos hechos por amigxs, siempre es más honesto. Hemos tenido malas experiencias a la hora de tocar para alguna discoteca local, y se nos estafado, así que ahora nos fijamos bien para quien tocamos. Si es por una buena "Causa" ahí estaremos, pero muchas veces la "Causa" pueden ser los bolsillos de algún

it participating in an often more extreme and visceral scene? Do you think you're taken as seriously as other, more radical offerings?

Gato: Well, on one hand it can be somewhat hard, since as you say the local scene is inundated with punk bands that usually play that fast hardcore with rotten vocals. It can seem like almost nobody intends to play punk rock. There's partly a reason for that: the majority of the current bands and locals are influenced by bands like Bad Taste, Mallorkaos, Ultimo Preso or Disease, hence bands like Usura, Cop de Fona, Trau, Orden Mundial, Wasted, Crash, etc. with such a raw sound (which I also like). But maybe they would have been different if they had been influenced more by los Cerebros Exprimidos or Eskoria… In any case we get along very well with everybody, they enjoy Trance, sing our songs and we also enjoy their infernal noise.

Rafa Murillo: I think so, because we take ourselves seriously. There will always be people that don't like your idea, but it's not our intention to appeal to everybody. When someone pretends to like everyone equally, what eventually happens is that you don't like anybody. But generally even the toughest people like to jump and have fun with a punk band. And some of our lyrics can have a radical or social tone, because injustice and abuse of power upset us very much. That's why irony, sarcasm, little drops of bitchiness exist. But things show themselves in the day-to-day, in your attitude towards life, and not only in typical agitprop lyrics. You won't see me spitting my political proclamations and then going to play Playstation or eat in a fancy restaurant.

Fede: What's your opinion on all this nostalgic '80s revival that's so fashionable these days?

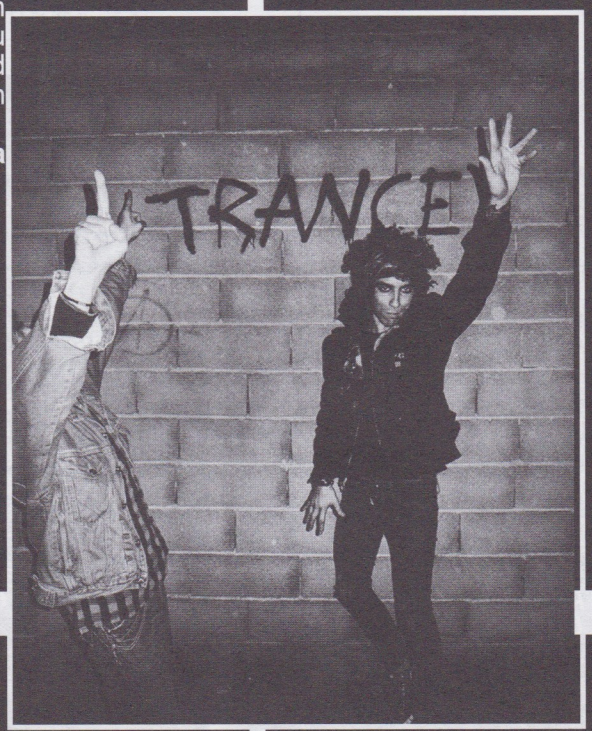
Gato: I couldn't care less…

Rafa Murillo: I don't care about whatever revival's going on at the moment. I listen to punk and older music, especially rock from the '60s and '70s; simple, fun things. And that's my influence.

Fede: If someone had thought of going to a desert island and accidentally ended up on Mallorca, what four places would you recommend they not miss?

Gato: El Arenal, Magaluf, Son Gotleu and Son Banya.

Rafa Murillo: Hombre de negocios camuflado en rockero simpático…



Rafa Murillo: Hemos tenido algunos desengaños y desavenencias con organizadores que no saben lo que es estar en una banda y que piensan únicamente con la cartera y no con el corazón. Aquí existe mucho la actitud de que, como se supone que te gusta tocar, lo puedes hacer prácticamente gratis y cuando y como ellos quieran. Todo muy burgués. Así que lo mejor es cuando eso lo organizamos los mismos músicos y gente que funciona verdaderamente con la autogestión DIY.

Fede: Vuestra formula sonora bebe de las fuentes clásicas del punk rock, sin hacer ascos a las melodías y las influencias de la nueva ola. ¿Cómo se lleva el hecho de participar de una escena a menudo más extrema y visceral ¿creéis que se os trata tan en serio como a otras propuestas más reivindicativas?

Gato: Bueno, por un lado llega a ser un tanto duro, ya que como bien dices la escena local está inundada por bandas punk que suelen practicar ese hard-core rápido con voces podridas, pareciera que casi nadie tiene intención de tocar punk rock, esto en parte tiene un porque, la mayoría de las bandas actuales y locales bebieron de la fuente de bandas como Bad Taste, Mallorkaos. Ultimo Preso o Disease de ahí bandas como Usura, Cop de fona, Trau, Orden Mundial, Wasted, Crash etc. con un sonido tan rudo (que a mí también me gusta) Pero quizás hubiese sido diferente si se hubiesen influenciado mas por los Cerebros Exprimidos o Eskoria… De todas maneras nos llevamos muy bien entre todos, ellos disfrutan de Trance, cantan las canciones y nosotros también disfrutamos de su ruido infernal.

Rafa Murillo: Pienso que sí, porque nosotros nos lo tomamos en serio, siempre habrá gente a la que no le guste tu propuesta, pero tampoco es nuestra intención gustarle a todo el mundo. Cuando alguien pretende gustar a todos por igual, lo que finalmente ocurre es que no gustas a nadie. Pero por lo general hasta los más rudos les gusta saltar y divertirse con una banda de punk rock. Y algunas de nuestras letras pueden tener un tono reivindicativo o social, porque nos fastidia mucho la injusticia y el abuso de los poderosos. Para eso está la ironía, el sarcasmo, unas gotas de mala uva. Pero las cosas se demuestran en el día a día, en tu actitud ante

Murillo: There are some really beautiful places in Mallorca, far from all the overcrowding, but I don't usually go on youthful camping trips anymore. So I like to go to parks with my dog, the boardwalk, the beach…

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ede: Are there good places to play in Mallorca? What former and current bands do you like on the island?

Gato: Sadly there aren't very many, rock is somewhat outside the mainstream in Mallorca. But luckily there are kids who are committed and usually put on shows, but it's almost always at the same places. Bandwise, I could name you los Cerebros Exprimidos (pioneers); I also like Dos Quinien and los Alegres Difuntos.

Rafa Murillo: Good places to play are Sa Possesió and Factoria de So. Unfortunately, right now there are no squatters; the authorities are really strict about private properties, even when they're abandoned and disgusting. There have always been rock bands in Mallorca. In the '60s this was a good nerve center, but not anymore. From the past I liked Cerebros Exprimidos (the first to play punk—together with Eskoria, although I didn't get to see them), Los Turkos (who were like our Cramps), los Malditos, los Crudos (kind of experimental rock) and some rockabilly bands. More recently, when I was already with Cannibales, I liked Bad Taste, Disease or Net Weight. And from now I like Doctor Martin Clavo, Orden Mundial, Quatermass, Desenterradas, and generally any band that smacks of punk or authentic rock. The few pop/rock bands, disco really, don't interest me too much. Also, I just really don't get that adjective they use now, "post."

Fede: Although there's a limited edition cassette of Maldición and a rerelease on CD of your demo, your inclination is clearly towards vinyl. What do you think of virtual releases? What arguments keep you faithful to vinyl?

Gato: I think that any way to listen to, or even put out, music is good. Of course I opt for a good vinyl record (either for its design or its sound) or for a good tape, they're the formats I've used my whole life. I also think CDs are really good to listen to in the car.

Rafa Murillo: It seems good to me to use whatever medium possible that you have at hand. In fact, Trance has put the two outtakes that we didn't put on the EP with Suicidas online. But, of course, nothing compares to charming old vinyl. And we're lucky enough to have the confidence of Metadona Records, and they only put out vinyl.

Fede: And to finish up, some rapid responses: A drink.

Gato: Water, beer… the basics.

Rafa Murillo: Fresh-squeezed orange juice, carajillo [coffee with brandy], beer… in that order.

la vida, y no únicamente cayendo en letras que son la típica agit-prop. No me verás escupiendo mis proclamas políticas y luego irme a jugar con la Playstation o a cenar a un restaurante de lujo.

Fede: Qué opinión os merece toda esta nostalgia revival de los años 80s que a día de hoy esta tan en boga?

Gato: Paso de tutti…

Rafa Murillo: Me trae sin cuidado cualquier revival que pueda haber. Yo escucho punk y música antigua, especialmente rock de los 60s y 70s, cosas sencillas y divertidas. Y esa es mi influencia.

Fede: Si alguien tuviera pensado ir a una isla desierta y por equivocación cayera en Mallorca, que cuatro lugares le recomendarías no perderse?

Gato: El Arenal, Magaluf, Son Gotleu y Son Banya.

Rafa Murillo: En Mallorca hay algunos lugares muy bellos, lejos de la masificación, pero ya no suelo ir de acampadas juveniles. Entonces me gusta ir con mi perro por los parques, el paseo marítimo, la playa…

Fede: ¿Hay buenos sitios donde tocar en Mallorca? ¿Qué grupos os gustan de ayer y de hoy en la isla?

Gato: Lamentablemente no hay muchos, el rock esta algo fuera de sector en Mallorca. Pero por suerte hay chicxs que apuestan y se suelen hacer conciertos, pero los sitios casi siempre son los mismos. De grupos te podría nombrar a los Cerebros Exprimidos (pioneros), también me gusta Dos Quinien y los Alegres Difuntos.

Rafa Murillo: Buenos sitios para tocar son Sa Possessió y Factoria de So. Desgraciadamente ahora no hay squaters, las autoridades son muy estrictas con las propiedades privadas, aunque éstas estén abandonadas y muertas de asco. En Mallorca siempre ha habido bandas de rock. En los 60 aquí era un buen centro neurálgico, pero hoy en día ya no. Del pasado me gustaban Cerebros Exprimidos (los primeros en tocar punk, junto a Eskoria, aunque a estos últimos no los llegué a ver), Los Turkos (que eran como nuestros Cramps), Los Malditos, Los Crudos (rock un tanto experimental) y algunos rockabillys. Más recientemente, cuando ya estaba con Cannibales, me gustaban Bad Taste, Disease o Net Weight. Y de ahora me gustan Doctor Martin Clavo, Orden Mundial, Quatermass, Desenterradas, y por lo general cualquier banda que huela a punk o a rock autentico. Las pocas

Fede: A food.
Gato: Mallorcan? Tumbet [Mallorcan ratatouille-type dish of potato, eggplant, peppers, tomato sauce, sometimes with pork or fish]
Rafa Murillo: Gazpacho, any type of pasta, paella

Fede: A city.
Gato: Bilbao, shit, RnR!
Rafa Murillo: I especially liked Granada and Bilbao when we were on tour.

Fede: A record.
Gato: *DMZ* (DMZ).
Rafa Murillo: *Here are the Sonics* (the Sonics), *Leave Home* (the Ramones).

Fede: A band.
Gato: The Ramones, Lee Perry in the '70s.
Rafa Murillo: Rolling Stones, Hüsker Dü… I'm sorry, it's really hard for me to name just one band.

Fede: A song.
Gato: Tervet Kadet, "Outo Ma."
Rafa Murillo: Richard Berry, "Louie Louie."

Fede: A magazine, publication, zine, radio, website or TV show.
Gato: Magazine: *Escena Obscena* (Argentina), Fanzine: *Escupe al Alcalde* (Spain)
Rafa Murillo: Various literature and comics. I have the ugly vice of reading. I don't know if they still publish it, but the magazine *Mondo Brutto* was vry entertaining. They wrote about music and some bizarre topics, and they put out a special punk issue and everything. Strictly musical, *Ruta 66*. And I'm always interested in any fanzine that falls into my hands.

Fede: A bar.
Gato: El TNT, El Can Vinagre.
Rafa Murillo: El TNT.

bandas que hay de pop/rock, propiamente disco, no me interesan demasiado. Además, no acabo de entender muy bien ese adjetivo que se ponen ahora de "post."

Fede: Aunque hay una reducida edición de cassette de *Maldici*ón y una reedición en CD de vuestro *Demo*, es evidente vuestra inclinación por el vinilo. ¿Que opináis de las ediciones de discos en formato virtual? ¿Qué argumentos os mantienen fieles al vinilo?
Gato: Pienso que cualquier vía para escuchar música o inclusive editarla es buena, claro que me decanto por un buen vinilo (ya sea por su diseño y su sonido) o por un buen cassette, son los formatos que usé toda la vida, también los CDs creo que son muy buenos para escuchar en el coche.
Rafa Murillo: Me parece bien utilizar cualquier medio posible que se tenga al alcance. De hecho, Trance hemos puesto en internet las dos outakes que no hemos metido en el EP junto a Suicidas. Pero, desde luego, nada es comparable al viejo y atractivo vinilo. Y tenemos la suerte de contar con la confianza de Metadona Records, y ellos sólo editan vinilos.

Fede: Y para acabar, unas de respuestas rápidas (una respuesta cada uno/a) - una bebida…
Gato: Agua, Cerveza… lo básico.
Rafa Murillo: Zumo de naranja recién exprimida, carajillo, cerveza (por ese orden)

Fede: Una comida.
Gato: Mallorquina? El tumbet.
Rafa Murillo: Gazpacho, cualquier tipo de pasta, paella.

Fede: Una ciudad.
Gato: Bilbao, Mierda, Rnr!
Rafa Murillo: Me gustaron especialmente Granada y Bilbao cuando hemos estado de gira.

Fede: Un disco.
Gato: *DMZ* (DMZ).
Rafa Murillo: *Here are the Sonics* (the Sonics), *Leave Home* (Ramones)

Fede: Un grupo.
Gato: The Ramones, Lee Perry en los 70s
Rafa Murillo: Rolling Stones, Ramones, Husker Du… Lo siento, me resulta muy difícil nombrar un solo grupo

Fede: Una canción
Gato: "Outo Ma" (Terveet Kadet).
Rafa Murillo: "Louie Louie" (Richard Berry).

Fede: Una revista, publicación, zine, radio, web o programa de TV?
Gato: Revista: *Escena Obscena* (Argentina). Fanzine: *Escupe al Alcalde* (Spain).
Rafa Murillo: Literatura diversa y comics. Tengo el feo vicio de leer. No sé si aún la publican, pero era muy divertida la revista *Mondo Brutto*. Escribían sobre música y algunos temas bizarros, y llegaron a sacar un especial punk y todo. Estrictamente musical, *Ruta 66*. Y siempre me interesa cualquier fanzine que cae en mis manos.

Fede: Un bar
Gato: El T.N.T, El Can Vinagre
Rafa Murillo: El T.N.T.

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SLUGBUGS

In the middle of Ohio it can be hard to avoid anything that isn't Ohio State or cows. Columbus, Ohio has been built as a utopia of shit for all things Middle America; Big Ten football, dairy farming, and cheap shitty beer. Such stupid life makes punk an oddity. Luckily, Columbus still has a handful of fuckers working to stomp out their utopia of shit. One of the news gang of oddities is Slugbugs. Slugbugs make music that sounds like the Swankys trying to cover the Screamers. Slugbugs got to sit down with Jimmy Turri in the Legion of Doom basement and talk about being a Slugbug. Here's how it went. Photos provided by the band.

Jimmy: Alright, Slugbugs. Let's have some introductions. Introduce yourself and tell us what you play in the band.

Guitar Hero: Guitar Hero, I play guitar.

Winston: [mouth full of Taco Bell] I'm Winston, I sing.

Drum Machine: Drum Machine, I play drums.

Banana: Banana "The Slug" Rice, I play keyboard.

Jimmy: Alright, lets talk a little bit about the origin of Slugbugs. Where does Slugbugs come from?

Guitar Hero: I just said I wanted to be in a band called Slugbugs for like four months and then, I dunno, decided to actually be in a band.

Banana: Yea, Em and I—excuse me, Guitar Hero and I—talked about it for a long time, and then we saw Drum Machine play for Beat Happening in a Halloween cover show and asked her to drum for us. And then found Winston.

Guitar Hero: We *found* Winston.

Banana: Just found him on a street.

Drum Machine: [laughs] That kid looks cool!

Winston: Lost and found.

Jimmy: So that's how y'all met? You met at a show or on the street?

Guitar Hero: Yea, well I play in Splashin Safari with Winston.

Winston: I love Guitar Hero. (all laugh)

Jimmy: Cool, that's good.

Drum Machine: [to Banana] I feel like I added you on Facebook because I was like "Oh yeah, I see her a lot." And then I remember—I don't think Guitar Hero would remember this—but I remember it was like the first show I ever went to in Columbus—when I moved here and wasn't just living back and forth between Cleveland and here. I remember that you were wearing a Curmudgeon shirt and I complimented it.

Guitar Hero: I remember that.

Drum Machine: And then you gave

me a flyer for... it was green and I think it said like, "something sucks" on it. It was like a kid doing homework on it.

Guitar Hero: No Power flyer.

Drum **Machine:** There we go, that was it.

Guitar Hero: It was for No Power, Enzuigiri, and it was here **[interview note: at the Legion of Doom]**.

Drum Machine: Then I don't think I went to another show for like a month or two cause it was really cold out.

Jimmy: So, just for reference, lets talk about maybe if you were in other bands or your other associations before Slugbugs, before you met.

Guitar Hero: When I lived in Indianapolis, I played in a band called Negative Vibes. And I still play, I sing in Splashin Safari. This is my first time playing an instrument in a band. I also do noise projects called Zzoid and Pisshole Surfers.

Winston: And Aull Dogs.

Guitar Hero: Well, I was in a band called Aull Dogs, but we broke up. We signed to Salinas Records and then broke up.

Banana: I sing in Teenage Strangers, and played bass and guitar in bands for years around Cleveland and Kent. But this is my first time playing keyboard in a band. I've had this keyboard since I was like five and never used it till now.

Jimmy: Awesome, making good use of it.

Drum Machine: I was real shy when I was younger so I never really started making music until I moved here, and that wasn't until like a year after, but I played clarinet for seven years classically.

Winston: We gotta figure out a way to involve that in Slugbugs.

Drum Machine: Yeah, I'm pretty good at the clarinet.

Guitar Hero: We just got an electric drum pad at VOA for a dollar.

Drum Machine: They're gonna replace me.

Guitar Hero: No, we're gonna add to you.

Drum Machine: We're gonna sample you playing.

Guitar Hero: Winston?

Winston: I have been in bands. The only ones I note are Splashin Safari, Making Friends, Tastes Kinda Like Sad, and...

Guitar Hero: [whispers] Yuze Boys.

Winston: I mean yeah, I was saying you know like, past bands, that I was

actually in the band or whatever.

Banana: Oh, Splashin Safari's a past band? (laughs)

Winston: Well, you know, it's like, not a lot of people who I know now know Tastes Kinda Like Sad or Making Friends in that sort of way. So whenever people see me they usually say like, "Oh you're in Splashin Safari." I don't consider it as a past band, but I consider it as my first time I was in a band where the entire band was actually wanting to do band stuff. First band that I was ever in that like, really went on tour or released a tape, or did... things. Cause Tastes Kinda Like Sad didn't do that. Making Friends didn't do that. Tessaiga would never ever do that [laughs].

Jimmy: So Winston, you just released a solo project.

Winston: Yea, yea. I have a lot of tapes from even when I used to live with my parents that I have the capabilities of bumping them from my four track to my computer to make them actually sound good. So what I do is, I have a Bandcamp where the majority of songs on it are songs that I'll just make in my room really randomly like before I have to go to work or something. I record them with my phone so they all sound terrible and lo-fi. So the reason I put that album ["Wee Snaw"] out on youtube is because I used Jeff [Yuze Boy]'s computer to put a tape that I've had for a while on the computer the way it would actually sound rather than it sounding like it's through a tin cup or something.

Jimmy: Do you relate that to Slugbugs in any way or is that something totally different? Do you feel that they're comparable?

Winston: I consider it as different just because the first way I ever played music was just playing guitar to a drum machine at a really ridiculous tempo. But with Slugbugs… it sounds really weird, but any time I do Slugbugs stuff or I sing or I think about writing the lyrics, I think about how Guitar Hero does it in Splashin Safari because I do not know anyone, any friend who I've had who's sang for a band, who has sang for a really silly band, where I feel like anything they're doing isn't really strategically planned. But I feel like, anytime (Splashin Safari) were gonna do something, Guitar Hero would just always have some sort of purpose or like, an entire lack of purpose for something, which would make sense. So I try to do that when I do stuff for Slugbugs. But that's where I usually get my inspiration for Slugbugs—from Guitar Hero. Which sounds really weird cause they're in Slugbugs [all laugh].

Jimmy: So you sort of feel an alignment between Slugbugs and Splashin Safari in a way?

Winston: Kind of, yeah. They're both fun. Bands that are fun to be in. And I've been in a lot of bands that aren't.

Jimmy: Yeah. Let's talk about what the mission of Slugbugs is. Like you were saying, it's kind of a fun band. Do y'all feel that's what the direction of Slugbugs is?

Guitar Hero: I think I take it pretty seriously just because it's my first time playing an instrument and, I like trying to make interesting music that's really simple still cause I can only play really simple stuff. So I think that's my main goal with Slugbugs—like how much, or how interesting something really simple can be.

Banana: Yeah, I agree. I mean, I do feel like we're really fun, in the music

we've made thus far and we all try to be a little goofy with it. I keep thinking of Slugbugs in relation to my other band.

Jimmy: Your other band being Teenage Strangers?

Banana: Yeah. Teenage Strangers is very much about aggression and dealing with a lot of trauma stuff and working through that, and this is a different kind of release where it's like, I don't have to think about that stuff. It's fun to figure out a new instrument, and I feel like we're all kind of doing something new with this band.

Drum Machine: Yeah, which is cool because then you don't go in with this feeling of inferiority to everyone else or you don't feel like if you fuck something up that everyone's gonna think less of you.

Guitar Hero: Yeah. I think Splashin Safari's really good, which is nice, but sometimes I just wanna write a song that's only one chord and really stupid. I feel like Splashin Safari's too good to do that, so this is a nice dumbed down project [all laugh]

Drum Machine: "A Nice Dumbed Down Project: Slugbugs."

Jimmy: So you came into your first show and your first show had a tape, right?

Guitar Hero: No, it was our second show.

Jimmy: But still, that's a pretty lofty goal for a new band, having a cassette at their second show.

Guitar Hero: I don't have a job. All I do is sit at home and do projects all day, so doing tapes and stuff is just kind of what I have to do so I have anything to do. And also, I feel like it's worth noting that this is the first thing I've ever recorded and Banana's recorded some more stuff, but it was kind of like a learning experience, as well.

Banana: As in like, we did the four track recording all on our own. We didn't bring anyone else in to record it.

Guitar Hero: And I think it sounds awesome.

Winston: I *truly* think it sounds awesome [all laugh]. No, like, I really enjoy the way that the Yuze Boys demo is recorded but like, I wasn't around when they recorded [the instruments for] the Slugbugs tape, and I feel like the amount of time and stuff that I had to do for the Yuze Boys tape, it sounds really silly to me. It sounds good, it sounds fine, but I think the Slugbugs tape has this whole aesthetic and sounds really good and better than that. And it's just like, I don't know how hard you worked on it... [Drum Machine and Banana laugh]

Winston: But literally, we started recording Yuze Boys' tape at 11'o'clock in the morning and finished with everything at 3:30 in the morning.

Banana: Oh my god we took, what, two hours?

Guitar Hero: We spent an hour and a half.

Winston: And this was recording and having to play songs over and over. Then I wasn't there for the whole [Slugbugs] mixing, but I knew Guitar Hero wouldn't make it that much of a straining process to record for the tape, so that's why I was just like, "Wow, this sounds really good." And they made me not sound terrible, cause I felt like I was just gonna sound terrible.

Banana: You sound great.

Winston: Everything sounds great on there.

Guitar Hero: When I was in the fourth grade I got a book for a dollar at a Guitar Center called *How To Build a Home Recording Studio For A Hundred Dollars* because it has a chapter on how to build one in a van, and I thought that was really cool. But I read that every time I pooped for two weeks and that's why the Slugbugs demo sounds good [all laugh].

Jimmy: All due props given. So, lets talk about some of the content on the demo. You have four songs [on the tape] and you have a longer live set than four songs. Were those the first four songs that you wrote?

Guitar Hero: Those were the four originals we had up until today. We were playing a Flipper cover that's like three minutes long. And the demo from Banana's keyboard plays on the cassette, but a lot shorter than what we play live. We just wrote another song tonight that's two minutes long, so, look out, world.

Drum Machine: It's a hefty one.

Jimmy: Lets talk about some of the lyrical content of the songs on the demo, or your songs in general.

Banana: That's all on Winston.

Winston: Aw shit.

Jimmy: First of all, I think one of the most memorable songs is "Cake My Face."

Winston: God damn [laughs]. We were having practice and I was trying to think of words for a song and I was like, "This could just be one of those songs where I just write a song based on something really weird that will be said by the end of practice." And Drum Machine was talking about like... smashing cake...

Drum Machine: I think it would feel really cathartic to take a sheet cake and—I saw it on *Broad City*—just take a sheet cake and put your face into it. It just would feel so good [laughs].

Winston: Yeah, that sounded amazing to me at the time.

Guitar Hero: On another note, today I put on a shirt and, it still smelled like the pies that were used at VVK Fest during Splashin Safari's set.

Jimmy: [laughs] Which was like six months ago or something?
Guitar Hero: It was a long time ago.
Banana: It was in July.
Guitar Hero: Yeah, July 4th of 2014. And on January 25th my clothes still smell like pie.
Banana: It would help if you did laundry occasionally.
Guitar Hero: Maybe.
Jimmy: "Video Film."
Winston: Oh, so, the title of "Video Film." I watch a lot of *Home Movies.*
Jimmy: The cartoon?
Winston: Yeah, the cartoon. And on *Home Movies* there's a character...I'm trying to think of his name. His voice is just ringing in my head. He's always like, [speaking softly] "Brendan. Brendan." But, he says, "video film" instead of "movies." I don't know why. He doesn't say "movies," he says "video film." And I was thinking of that cause when I first heard that song, it just reminded me of a lot of Screamers songs, sadly to say. But not in a bad way, just in a sense of [being] really psyched about it. And then the words just kind of came to me. So a lot of the lyrics [to that song] are just weird, creepy lyrics that revolve around being watched. I feel like a lot of Slugbugs' songs, I try to not make them all about being watched by the government or something. But that's what that one's about, that's why I named it "Video Film" because one day I was watching *Home Movies* and he just kept saying it over and over.
Jimmy: Ok, "Parasox"?
Winston: For some reason I was thinking about Andy Gardner [Stench Consultants/Puberty Wounds] a lot and when we went on Puberty Wounds tour together and how he's really about his socks. I couldn't find socks one day when I woke up late to Slugbugs' practice, and I was thinking about how I have so many pairs of socks but I just don't know where they go. Like, I have *a lot* of socks. I still can't find the socks. So the words go, "Pair of socks, pair of socks, lost inside the paradox of clothes I left inside my room, the night before and I was doomed, what I do?" So yeah, it's just about losing your socks.
Banana: I really loved Winston trying to explain that song to us the first time he sang it (laughs). "Like, it's like paradox, but with *'pair of* socks." Real deep.
Winston: Yeah, Charles Bukowski or something. It's that deep.
Jimmy: We might as well cover the fourth song, or the other song on the demo called "I Wanna Be a Slugbug!"
Winston: Oh, you know, I feel like just in the history of punk or whatever, and the fact of having the potential album by the name of "Wanna Be Slugbugs?", you have to have a song about it. Or just a song that refers to what you're about, or what you're into. I feel like if someone asks you what kind of band Slugbugs is, you can play "I Wanna Be A Slugbug!" and it tells you what to do, and then you're like, "I either wanna do that or I don't."

Guitar Hero: It's an anthem.
Winston: Yeah, it's an anthem!
Jimmy: That just brings me to a question—why Slugbugs? Why do you wanna have a punk band called Slugbugs? Why do you wanna be a slugbug?
Banana: The name was Guitar Hero's choice. We play a lot of slugbug in the car. We get real fierce about it.
Jimmy: You play slugbug?
Banana: Yeah.
Jimmy: What's slugbug?
Guitar Hero: Slugbug is when you see a Volkswagen Beetle and you yell the color out and you punch your friend.
Jimmy: Oh, we called it "punch buggy."
Banana: That's what my sister called it!
Drum Machine: I also call it a punch buggy.
Guitar Hero: I have been told that punch buggy is an East Coast thing, and slugbug is a Midwest thing. And if that's true, that fits with the thesis [of being a Midwest punk band] as well. Also, Slugbugs is just a cool word. I feel like there's some sort of analogy that could be made about seeing colors and punching your friends, but I don't really know what that is.
Jimmy: Speaking of differences between East Coast and Midwest punk, why do you think it is that punk bands that come from the Midwest are always very bizarre?
Winston: There's a lot of fields in the Midwest. I blame it on the fields.
Guitar Hero: I think about this a lot because this is what my whole zine [*Cretins of Distortion*] is about, but I think the Midwest has more bizarre and better bands because there's less hip people and there's less people who find out what's "good." So say like something will get really popular in like New York. It won't get to the Midwest for a couple of months, and by the time it catches on in scenes in the Midwest everyone's kind of moved on from that [on the East Coast]. I don't think that people in the Midwest try to grab on to hip things and punk trends as much as bigger cities tend to do, because it's just not as in the now to be hip, and so the bands tend to just be music they like.
Banana: I feel like also in the Midwest you've got a lot of people who are just, I dunno, who are just bored? And start playing music for something to do. That's how I started playing music. I mean, I come from a really musical family and everything, so I'm sure I was influenced by that. But it's not about like, "Oh I heard this really hip thing," like Guitar Hero's saying, or, "What's the latest punk trend?" or something. It's just like, "I'm just gonna do this thing." Maybe being kind of isolated from the rest of what's going on, you really come up with some interesting things—some really unique parts and

bands.

Guitar Hero: I also think it's really hard here to find three other people who like the kind of music you like, and so you have different tastes [amongst members] in most bands in the Midwest.

Jimmy: So it comes from a mix of different people with different ideas of things they like and things they wanna put into the music?

Guitar Hero: Yeah.

Banana: I'm sure the four of us don't really have too much that we all like. I mean, I'm sure we have certain things that we all listen to, but we all listen to a lot of different things.

Guitar Hero: We all listen to "No Flex Zone" by Rae Sremmurd [all laugh].

Banana: Yeah, that song's really good.

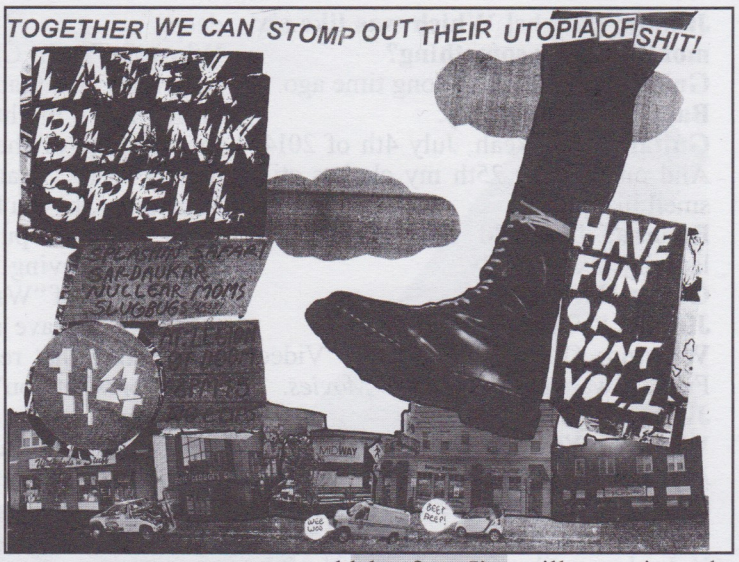
Winston: [sighs] Yes. I like the no flex zone.

Guitar Hero: I've interviewed a lot of bands in the Midwest now and talked to and been friends with lots of bands in the Midwest, and another thing is like, almost every band I meet is like, "Oh yeah, our guitar player really likes this. He turned me onto this thing, and I think it's cool, and I showed him this." But then—no offense to my friends in bigger cities—but when I meet people in like Boston and Philadelphia it's just like, "Oh, we all fucking love Japanese hardcore." And it's like, yeah it's great, but there's not the trade-off. I dunno, sitting around and honing really good Japanese hardcore can be cool, but it's not what I wanna do with my time.

Jimmy: How do you relate Slugbugs to what's going on in the Columbus underground music scene, Columbus Sucks Because You Suck?

Banana: I feel like we're pretty different from most of what's happening around Columbus right now. I don't know how to describe that better.

Guitar Hero: I would say I would maybe lump us together with Splashin Safari and Stench Consultants, but I also don't know if that really counts because we either live with or are in a band with every member of those bands. But I feel like there's been a really big drop in house shows and caring about house shows this year, and Slugbugs' goal and Stench Consultants' goal and Splashin Safari's goal is to make fun house shows again, and make something new. The shift in house shows, to me, has just been credited to bands getting really popular and more accessible music getting popular in this DIY scene in Columbus, and I think that that's kind of grown out of the house scene. I think it's kind of time to, not necessarily start something new, you know, but to not cater to that crowd and just be like, "Here's a new thing. If you like it, you like it. Come and hang out with us."



Jimmy: So you are more interested in playing house shows and not bars or musical venues?

Banana: Absolutely.

Guitar Hero: Yeah. Personally speaking, I don't play bars unless it's absolutely necessary, like we're on tour and desperately need a show. Especially in Columbus where there's a constant amount of dependable house venues, I just don't really think it's necessary to play bars.

Banana: Yeah, I prefer not to play bars. I mean being able to play an all ages show, I think that's really important. As a sober person—I've been sober for two years and 24 days now—and for me personally, it's very hard to play at a bar because I used to always do that while I was drinking, and I very closely associate those two things. Being able to play music sober is still a pretty new experience to me, so I just prefer to play house shows, personally, in that I'm more comfortable, but I think it's important, too.

Guitar Hero: Splashin Safari plays shows all the time, and we play the majority of punk and hardcore shows that come to town, and I feel like we play all the best shows and have played one or two bad shows, maybe, in the year and a half that we've been a band. And I know that if we played bars that wouldn't be the case. And so, it's like, I think it's paid off, cause every band we've played with we've made friends with and enjoyed.

Jimmy: Looking into the future of Slugbugs, do you plan on touring? Any plans for future releases?

Banana: We're definitely hoping to tour and as soon as possible, but haven't actually finalized anything yet.

Guitar Hero: No specific tour plans, except that we wanna do it. Probably another tape really soon.

Drum Machine: I think a weekend would be fun. I'm still very into that idea.

Guitar Hero: Yea. My friend's band, The Wrong (from Chicago) has mentioned us maybe doing some of their tour with them, but, you know, we'll see what happens.

Banana: In the summer.

Drum Machine: I'm in school so I really ruin everything.

Winston: Yeah, summer tours are fine, but I really enjoyed Splashin Safari's winter tours. Especially like, that was when I started going on tour for the first time. I just enjoyed doing it in the shittiest conditions cause then it didn't even feel bad because it was just exciting the entire time. I remember going to sleep and then waking up when we were going to Kevin's house, when we were in Bloomington, and there was snow everywhere. And I was like, "What the fuck?" and I got out of the van and I was just like, "This is awesome. I don't know where I am. There's snow everywhere. It's super cold." And then I remember being in Athens (Ohio), and that was probably the same tour, but I slid down the entire hill at The Lodge with a cab on my lap. I was holding it, slipped and fell.

Guitar Hero: Yeah, me and Patrick did it, too.

Winston: We all fell down that hill so many times, it was just so snowy. And I'll talk to people like Jeff and Jeff'll be like, "Fuck touring in winter," and I'll be like, "Dude, that's the most fun." It's so fun.

Guitar Hero: I feel like there was a year that Splashin Safari only played shows at houses we lived at, so we never had to deal with loading in. When we'd go on tour, loading in was a new experience.

Banana: I actually wanna tour as soon

as possible. Drum Machine and I are both from Cleveland, and Guitar Hero is from Indianapolis, and I feel like just being able to share this thing I'm doing with friends afar would be great.

Drum Machine: Yea, it's been cool having friends be like, "Make sure you save some tapes for Cleveland."

Banana: I've played in bands since I was like sixteen or seventeen or something—so, well over ten years, way more—and haven't actually ever gone on tour with a band I'm in, and I just want to do that really bad. And I feel like this is a great band to do that with. I feel like people will really enjoy it.

Guitar Hero: I gotta get my oil changed [all laugh]. I book shows constantly so I always am like, "I should be on tour. All these bands coming through are so much luckier than me." It's just time to do it.

Jimmy: You book a lot of shows, so let's talk about a lot of things that are going on in Columbus.

Guitar Hero: We have a hotline that you can call, 260-PUNK-SHO, and I'll tell you all the shows that are happening. We have a calendar that has been really consistent and is really good, and it lists all of the all ages shows. They're always at Used Kids, which I think is the best record store. It's where I got all my favorite records at. I've only lived in Columbus for two years now, and right now there's more bands that I like than ever before. I feel like a year ago there was only one or two punk bands that were worth anything and now there's like five or six really awesome ones. It's exciting to book shows and be like, "I can get this band to play," and not like, "Aw, man, I have to find a band to play."

Jimmy: Name some of those bands.

Guitar Hero: I also wanna say this is the first time a lot of bands have had demos. We have demos from us, Stench Consultants, Nuclear Moms, Yuze Boys, Winston's new demo. Who else has demos? Splashin Safari has a new tape. They're all great. They're all solid and stuff I want to share with other people and talk about in my zine, so that's really fun. Sardaukar's supposedly gonna have a demo soon. They're from Athens. They're really good.

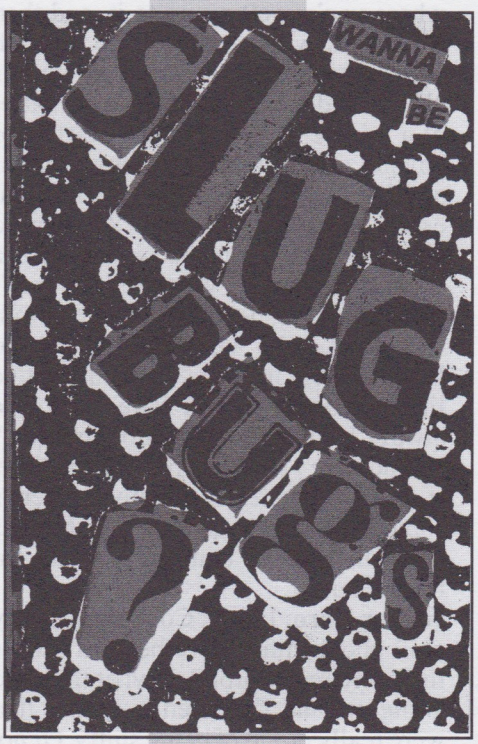
Winston: Sardaukar is awesome.

Banana: Guitar Hero's been doing tapes of the past few shows that they've booked.

Guitar Hero: Yeah, I'm trying to make live bootleg tapes of every show I book, and mostly have just trade them out as much as possible, cause I have a pretty decent recorder. So then you can listen to your favorite band and be forced to listen to four bands from Columbus, and I think that's pretty cool.

Jimmy: Such a good idea.

Guitar Hero: What else is going on in Columbus?



Drum Machine: I dunno. I like it here, though. I feel like it's just really encouraging as a city. At least our little DIY punk scene is really encouraging. It took me a really long time to feel like I was worth being able to play music. The people I hung out with in Cleveland had been playing music for years and they would be in these bands that were really good, and I never saw myself fitting into that. The Legion Halloween show this past year was the first show I ever played, and I remember like a year before going to that show and standing in the corner and I was still really new here. I didn't talk to anybody but I was like, "Wow, that would be really cool." And then a year later I played it. And after that Guitar Hero was like, "Banana and I were talking and we're starting this band, and would you wanna drum?" And I was like, "Yea, but I'm really bad and I've only done this once." But then they were just like, "We're all starting on new stuff, too." I remember going over to Banana's for the first time to jam or whatever and I remember being really nervous 'cause I wore a gray shirt, and I was like, "I'm gonna sweat right through this! They'll be able to tell how nervous I am!" But I honestly feel like if I had stayed where I was, I would never have come out of that shell, and I would have grown up and have regretted a lot of stuff and just still not feel like I ever fully belonged in something.

Banana: I totally agree about Cleveland. There's a lot of good bands there, but people wanna play very, I guess, technically good music. There's not as many just simple punk bands coming out of that city and it's not at all encouraging. It's a lot of the same people starting bands with the same people. Living there I'd always would be like, "Yo, somebody invite somebody else to be in a band with you!"

Drum Machine: Oh my gosh, I remember sitting there once and somebody being like, "We need somebody to play bass for this new band." And I was like, "I'll learn it!" and then they asked this other dude who had *never* played bass before and I was like, "Are you fucking kidding me?" It sucks.

Banana: Yeah, Cleveland's a very dude city, for sure.

Winston: I hear that from so many of my friends who are from Cleveland. They're all like, "Yeah, I wanted to learn," but then they're like, "Ah, no, so-and-so's been playing this instrument for like 20,000 years so we're just gonna let them do it" and just not give anyone else a chance out of fear of being different or sucking.

Banana: I feel like Columbus is very encouraging even in like, the fact that Drum Machine has been using my roommate Andy's drums for everything. Everybody's willing to share stuff and show you how to do something. It's a good city for starting out.

Guitar Hero: If you start a band in Columbus everyone will make sure you're down and have everything good, and they'll book your band as much as you want no matter how you sound and will say they like it. I haven't seen a band start where people are like, "That band fucking sucks." That happened a lot in other scenes I've been in, but here it's just like, "Cool, new band. We'll like them until they're actually good or we'll just like them because they're bad." Also shout outs to Shout Out Loud

Prints and Jimmy Buttons and Stinkos and stuff. Like, if you're in a band, you can have shirts and tapes and buttons made, or if you wanna do a zine, I'll print it for you in a day. There's lots of not only good options to be a band, but you can be a real band really easy here. Shane can record you really well, or like seven people can record you on their four track really well.

Banana: Shane from Good Shade.

Guitar Hero: Shane from Good Shade, another really good band.

Jimmy: That's awesome. There's lots of really good things going on in Columbus.

Guitar Hero: Yeah and really bad things, too. Like newspapers and bars that are too big for the shows they have and bands that are too big for the scenes they're in. Stuff like that. Blanket statement.

Banana: Vague shit talk.

Guitar Hero: Oh and the really big university that's really bad and all the kids that go to it, except for... **Drum Machine.** Except it's copy quota's good. I need to find out if they're still giving me 1,500 prints per week.

Guitar Hero: Yeah you do. I just finished a zine. I was actually gonna talk to you about that tonight.

Drum Machine: I'm not gonna talk about that. It's not interesting for right now. But yeah, Columbus is cool. Also I think there's all kinds of different kinds of representation in Columbus than in... I guess the only thing I have to draw back to is Cleveland. And I don't wanna sound like I'm talking shit on Cleveland, I loved Cleveland when I lived there. I loved growing up there, but...

Jimmy: But what you're saying is Columbus is better?

Drum Machine: Yeah, I dunno. A lot of Cleveland people will throw me up the stake for that.

Banana: I feel like I just hear that same thing, and especially from anyone that isn't a white dude that comes from Cleveland. Like you move elsewhere and you just feel like suddenly you can actually breathe and do things and be supported. Yea, I love Cleveland as a city, but I never felt comfortable or accepted.

Drum Machine: I just remember being like, "Oh, cool, the locals [in Columbus] are women or non-binary or queer or people of color," and it's a weird thing cause you always hear that unless you see representation of yourself you can never really see yourself at that point. So when I moved here I was like, "Oh, wow, I *can* do something like this." It feels good. It's pretty inspiring. That word's cheesy, but I just see these people and that makes me feel so motivated to do something.

Winston: I feel like Columbus, to me, ever since I've been a kid, has just been like one of those speed tracks in Sonic the Hedgehog, and you have that way where you're getting up to it, and then Columbus will speed you up through it, and then you'll be a nobody who is all of a sudden a somebody in a matter of a minute. It's like a good starter for anyone who wants to do any craft or anything as boring as like, being a real estate agent or something. You can do that here. It's weird because I have a lot of friends that I've made who aren't from here, especially friends from Cleveland, who talk about that, and I can't even imagine it because I've literally always lived here, and I've always been like, "I can do anything." But not like *I can do* anything, but like, if I wanted to learn something there's someone or some place in Columbus that can make it that much easier for me to learn it.

Guitar Hero: I think Columbus is very chill about things. I've been in scenes that were really proud of what they had going on, and I've been in scenes that were really proud of being shitty. Or not shitty, but just not having a lot going on. Like, "We're proud of the four bands we have and the three shows a month we have." And I've been part of scenes that were like, "We have all these shows and we have all these people and we have all this help," and I got pretty burnt out on both of them. Then I moved here and I was like, everyone's got stuff going on. Everyone realizes what they have going on and it's a good thing, but I don't think people make a point of it in a really annoying way. They're not like, "Columbus has all these types of bands and these types of people and we offer these things." They're just like, "Yea, it's Columbus. There's these cool bands and these cool bands and I learned how to do this." No one's trying to do anything and I think it's nice and level.

Banana: It just happens.

Jimmy: It just happens. That's a good point. So let's try and wrap this up. Where do you see Slugbugs as a band a year from now?

Drum Machine: Let's lay out our five year plan. Good thing I brought my charts.

Winston: One of my goals is to open for the Sidekicks [all laugh].

Guitar Hero: Lots of bands in Columbus bands sign to Epitaph Records, and we think that we should sign to Hellcat Records. I think we're the Hellcat band of Columbus.

Jimmy: Would that be DIY? Would that be okay by your standards?

Guitar Hero: We would only do it if we were paid in original paintings by Tim Armstrong.

Drum Machine: Yeah, I think I'd really like to release something on either Spotify or iTunes.

Guitar Hero: Seriously though, by the end of the year I wanna have a 7" and a song that everyone loves and a song that everyone hates.

Jimmy: On the 7"?

Guitar Hero: No, just in general. People will be like, "I fucking love that Slugbugs song, but what's up with that other one? It's so annoying." I wanna have both of those songs written and I wanna have a record cause I've never done that before.

Winston: I'm into the idea of literally putting out several 7"s of just like singles that, exactly like you said. One is really good and one is just really terrible.

Guitar Hero: It'd be like how power-pop bands always have one killer song and then two filler songs, but it would be more fun. But seriously, if anyone wants to put out a tape or a record for us, we'll do it.

Banana: Especially Hellcat.

Jimmy: So anyone can put out a Slugbugs release?

Guitar Hero: Yeah, but it won't be guaranteed that it's good.

Jimmy: Any closing comments or words for the zine readers of the world?

Guitar Hero: Read more zines, write more zines. If you have a zine or demo tape of any content, send it to 2656 Dayton Ave., Columbus, Ohio, 43202, and I'll send you back something of equal value. Shout out to bands that come to Columbus and play house shows and realize people worked hard to make it happen and are happy about it, fuck you to bands that come to Columbus and play bar shows to no one and then talk shit about Columbus.

Banana: I'll stand by that.

Winston: Hell yeah. That's pretty solid.

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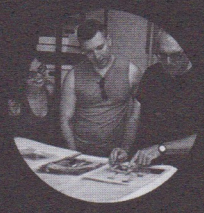

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CAPITALIST KIDS

I'm a big fan of confusing bands. Easy music is boring music. And as far as punk bands, the Capitalist Kids confuse the hell out of me. I had heard of them because a friend of mine was in their early lineup, but—honestly—never really gave them a good listen until they contacted me about playing a show in Carbondale, IL. They sound like classic '90s pop-punk, but are one of the most directly political bands I know of these days. They sing songs about Ayn Rand, the racist US justice system, and Trayvon Martin. They also sing straight-up bubblegum power-pop love songs about girls. There's something really endearing to me about a band that is willing to ostracize both the political punks and the apolitcal punks. The Capitalist Kids don't really fit into any particular scene in their hometown of Austin—or anywhere, and I think that's a good thing cause who the hell wants to be pigeonholed?

I had a conversation with Jeff Gammil, the Kids' lead singer and guitarist. He's a really smart, well-spoken guy and had a lot of interesting things to say. Which I suppose you'll figure out for yourself when you're done with this terrible intro and read the interview for yourself. Interview and intro by Ray Martinez. Photos in order by Meggie Hilkert, Jeff Lasich, Jim Testa, Jim Testa, and Marc Gaetner

So exactly what is the point in keeping pop-punk alive in 2014?
Ha! Good question. I think because if it dies completely, we will have to face the cold, hard fact that we are a dinosaur. Strictly speaking, pop-punk reached perfection when Screeching Weasel recorded "(Nothing's Gonna) Turn Me Off (of You)." That was 1996—almost 20 years ago. Most people have moved on. But I think pop-punk has the ability to grow and endure—although I like to keep my definition of "pop-punk" pretty broad. Like the Arrivals. Would you call *Volatile Molotov* a pop-punk record? To me it is, because I love it.

Whatever Jeff likes is pop-punk—just kidding. I'm not sure if I'd call the Arrivals a pop-punk band. What kind of pop-punk band covers "Hot For Teacher"?! It seems that you and I came from the same general leather jackets and Chuck Taylors idea of what pop-punk is background, but for a lot of people it's stemmed in Saves the Day or even stuff like Simple Plan. While the Arrivals have a total workingman Nelson Algren/Art Shay attitude towards their melodic punk, I feel that some of the bands that get lumped into the genre are barely punk at all—musically/aesthetically/politically. I mean, even the Ramones wrote "Bonzo Goes to Bitburg." Has pop-punk become a bastion for apathetic party punks?
Oh yeah, "pop-punk" has become worthless as a label. I tend to prefer the term "power-pop" these days, but that can also be a wide umbrella. Can you have fuzzy distorted power chords and still be power-pop, or are you automatically (shudder) "Ramones-core"? In the immortal words of William Joel, "It's still rock and roll to me."

I had been aware of the Capitalist Kids for a few years, but didn't really get hooked until I heard your amazing, scathing song about Ayn Rand. Besides it being an incredibly well written song, the fact that there was a bubblegummy punk band writing a whole song about Rand being a sociopath made me so happy. What draws you to write songs like "Infinite Growth on a Finite Planet" that actually uses the phrase "peak oil" while at the same time writing flat out, straight forward songs about girls like "Closer To You"?
I don't really know. It's nice to have an outlet for both. I have a lot of concerns about the state of things, and I don't see how I could not try to get some of those ideas out there. But I also play music primarily for fun. When I allow myself to write a fluffy little love song, just focusing on trying to be clever or have an interesting rhyme scheme or something, it's really freeing. Like I recently wrote a song called "Second to Morrissey," which is something probably approaching a novelty song, and it felt like it just wrote itself. Whereas writing a song with some kind of socio-political content usually requires more effort. You have to be a little more deliberate about what you're saying—that's not to say all my love songs are completely frivolous. Some of them are trying to say something, I think.

Is there a perfect ratio of political song to love song that you're trying to maintain for the band? Like, do you ever find yourself being like, "Oh shit! It's time to write something more serious?"
Oh, man, that question hits pretty close to home. There isn't an actual ratio that I'm shooting for; I always just think of it as roughly half personal/half political. But recently a friend pointed out to me that on *Too Big To Fail*, there were more political songs overall. So now I can see that the percentage of political songs has been gradually declining over the past three albums. The last two split 7"s we put out each deliberately had one love song, one political song, and one cover. There could be a number of factors involved: It's harder to say something that I haven't already covered; I feel out of my depth on certain issues; the inspiration just happens to be hitting me less often; the topical nature of certain subjects can be tricky. I've got a bunch of songs piling up for the next recording, and very few of them are political. So, yes, I have had the feeling that, "Oh shit, it's time to write something more serious." I just don't want to force anything because it's what people expect from us—I don't know that anyone would care at all—but personally I like the idea that the band stands for something. But if those words don't come, they don't come. If anyone reading this wants to donate some brilliant political lyrics they are not using, e-mail them to thecapitalistkids@hotmail.com [laughs].

The Austin scene seems to have the shadow of Chaos In Tejas-hardcore looming pretty strongly over it, not to mention the endless sea of garage rock. When it comes to poppier punk, it seems that only some of the Denton bands (like the universally loved Marked Men) get a pass from all the punks. Exactly where do you guys see yourselves fitting into the DIY music scene in Austin?
Yeah, that's pretty accurate. We've just kind of had to work out our own little niche. We have a small core group of fans, and there are a couple other bands out there doing something similar to what we are that we play with often. But we don't get any respect from the cooler kids in town, which is always a bit of a bumout because one gets the sense that a few of them would like us if they were exposed to us without any preconceived notions of what genre we fit into. If only we had that magical crossover appeal that Mean Jeans pull off [laughs].

Maybe you need to write more songs about partying and pizza! Have you guys actively tried to get on shows with bands that are aligned with you more politically than musically? Or do you find the scene in Austin far too stratified for something like that to work out?
We've played benefits before with very mixed bills. Occupy Austin, Bikes Across Borders, the Center for Economic Research and Social Change. But other than that, I can't say we've actively tried that. I feel like we are in a sort of no man's land musically—too punk for the masses, too pop for the punkers.

I really like the fact that the Capitalist Kids don't just talk the vague cursory punk politics of "fuck the system" and "all cops are bastards." Your newest album has the song "On-Purpose Racist," which, while not only skewering that terrible Brad Paisley/LL Cool J song, tackles, directly, the murder of Trayvon Martin. That's a pretty heavy subject for a white dude pop-punk band from Texas to be covering. What drew you guys to writing that song?

On one hand, it seems like an obvious subject for a song because it was such a high-profile case, and I had always wanted to do a song about racism, but the subject was always too vast for me to tackle. That incident sort of put a point on it. And it's not just a song about racism; it's an anti-"stand your ground" song. But a kid was dead, and it brought out so much ugliness in people, and so many absurd things were being said. Geraldo Rivera said "I think the hoodie is as much responsible for Trayvon Martin's death as George Zimmerman was," and I guess that gave a jumping off point for the lyrics. But it is a heavy subject, and after I wrote it and the band played it, I was a little uneasy about the whole thing, because the song is so poppy in a way. The problem is, that's all I'm good at writing. Every time in the recent past that I've tried to write something a little darker musically, those songs tend not to work out. So here's a song basically about the fact that in modern-day America a white man can murder a black man and get off scot-free, and it makes people want to dance. I still don't know how I feel about it. Although, maybe that's just kind of our modus operandi. Our old song "Necessary Evil" is a similar case. It's a song about the (in my opinion, unnecessary and criminal) dropping of two separate atomic bombs on Japan, and it's always been one of our most popular songs, because it's rockin'. At least the bridge switches to a minor chord.

It's interesting that you mention the uneasiness with that song. I've found myself just mindlessly singing some of your lyrics, cause the hooks are catchy as fuck, and thinking, "Fuck, am I really walking down the street happily singing about capital punishment?" Are you ever worried that some people who like your band don't actually give a damn about what you're singing about? Or feel weird when drunk party punks are gleefully, but mindlessly, singing along to some of the heavy shit you sing about?
But wouldn't it be cool if someone was just infected with one of our little earworms because the tune was catchy, and then at some point they thought about the words for the first time, and it actually made them stop and consider something for a moment that they otherwise wouldn't have?

Good fucking point! You've got a great reference to the British comedy Peep Show in the title of your song "I'm Just a Normal Functioning Member of the Human Race and There's No Way Anyone Can Prove Otherwise." Which characters of that show do the members of Capitalist Kids identify with the most. I ask cause I used to think I was like Jez, until I realized that I was definitely Mark.
I think my answer will be obvious, because I used that Corrigan quote as the title of a very personal song. Obviously I'm not exactly like him, but when I heard him say that, I felt like he was speaking my own thoughts.

In the same vein, thanks for helping bring back Simpsons references in punk songs, and for using samples. It seems that the art of the tasteful sample has been lost since the early '00s. I've always thought that was a great tool of punk—borrowing from other places to clarify a personal/artistic/political point. What draws you to picking out the samples/references that you use in a song?
I guess I didn't realize we were bringing that back, but you're welcome. Simpsons references are woven into the very fabric of my being, so they're bound to come out here and there. That's not even the first Milhouse quote in our songs. On our very first, long out-of-print CDEP, the song "Jenny, Destroyer of Men" features the line, "If you have a failing, it's that you always demand perfection—*if* you have a failing." As far as picking samples, it's usually just a matter of something catching your ear and just making a mental note, "We could use that as a sample somewhere" and hoping it works out.

Every time I listen to your lyrics I hear echoes of a couple of melodic punk singers. Rank these possible influences on Capitalist Kids in order of how much they actually have influenced you and maybe elaborate on them a little bit: Lance Hahn of J Church/Cringer, Dr. Frank of The Mr. T Experience and Greg Graffin of Bad Religion.
I can rank those easily: Lance Hahn on the bottom, Graffin in the middle, and Dr. Frank at the top. J Church had no discernible influence on me, but Bad Religion is one of my all-time favorites. Even though I wasn't smart enough to understand most of his lyrics when I first heard them, you can always go back and appreciate them anew, and I think that's beautiful. I probably still don't know all the 50-cent words he uses. And Dr. Frank is just the undisputed master of songwriting. It's not even fair to the rest of us what he can do with lyrics. Most bands don't have as many rhymes on an entire record as he has on a single song like "Who Needs Happiness (I'd Rather Have You)" or "Hangin' On To You." And he's never just making clever rhymes for their own sake; he's almost always saying something deceptively deep at the same time. He's an actual genius. It's kind of sad how underrated MTX is. Whenever I meet someone who doesn't care for MTX I'm just stunned and confused. So, yeah, people have picked up on the fact that our band is a little MTX-esque. We definitely gave it away with that *Sarah b/w Ayn* cover. Frank himself even wanted one when they came out. He told me "Sarah" was a cool song, and he wrote on his blog that he liked the Sarah/wear a/pair o' rhyme. That was one of the most surreal moments of my life.

What bands and artists would people be surprised to find out are deeply influential to the band?
Well, the interesting thing about the Capitalist Kids is that so much of our music is in truth directly influenced by, in my opinion, two bands: the Clash, and Stiff Little Fingers (hilarious High Fidelity reference). Although we have many times talked about covering a SLF song. It's a tough question. We all listen to a vast amount of music, but how much of it actually influences the way we play I couldn't say. I will tell you that one time I was playing They Might Be Giants in my car and Dugg said he was surprised no one had ever made the connection between TMBG and my stuff. With this new album, one friend did make that comparison on one song. If it's in there, that's awesome, but I don't personally recognize it.

Dugg is a very wise man. Has there ever been a topic that you guys wanted to write a song about but thought, "Man, I don't know if we can pull it off," or thought that it would have been inappropriate for you to tackle the subject? Any songs scrapped because the subject didn't come off the way you wanted it to?
Yeah, plenty of songs get scrapped. I failed at writing a song about how they shut the highway down for the funeral procession of Navy sniper Chris Kyle, who was known as "the Devil of Ramadi" for his 160 kills. He was killed at a shooting range by a friend of his who suffered from PTSD. There's so much material there, but I don't have the skill to chisel a worthwhile song out of it. Come to think of it, that was my second failed attempt at writing a song about the military/PTSD. I've never had a case of considering something inappropriate to tackle, but I've never been able to successfully write something from a female point of view. Not that I have tried that much. I just figure that's not my domain.

I guess that's what I'm asking when I say "inappropriate." Do you feel like you *shouldn't* address a topic in the place of another person? Like, say, singing about gender issues/sexism from a female point of view or tackling racism from the point of view of a person of color. How much would your personal politics come into play in making that decision?
One thing I find is tricky is, how is the listener going to know whose viewpoint the song is from? One of my favorite Billy Bragg songs of all time is "Valentine's Day is Over." But I didn't immediately catch on to the fact that it's sung from the viewpoint of a woman because the words are coming out of Billy Bragg's mouth. I won't go so far as to say that I *shouldn't* attempt those things (although it would probably be foolish for me to pretend I know what it's like to be an oppressed minority). But the thing is, I'm not a writer. I'm not going to create fictional characters and speak from their point of view. Other people can do that, and their songs will probably be more powerful than mine, but that's just not my style.

What's your proudest lyrical achievement? Like, which song, once it was all done and in the can were you like "Man, I can't believe I pulled off singing about that!"
I have lyrics that I'm proud of, even if I've never had that exact sentiment. "Don't Make Waves" comes to mind. It expresses a lot of things that I wanted to express. I don't usually get that "deep." One day there was a black woman standing on a corner downtown with a sign, yelling to whoever would listen about an injustice. And the thing was, she was not crazy—she was sane in a crazy world. But when you step out of line like that, you make people

so uncomfortable. I went home and wrote down all my thoughts about it, and later on I made it all rhyme. I don't know if that song ever hit home with anyone, but I think it came out well. I guess "No Flowers for the Liberators" is pretty successful at painting a picture of how US military intervention in Iraq/Afghanistan breeds more terrorism. I'm proud that it presents a view that is so contrary to the dominant narrative, i.e. the US is the good guy. One instance where rather than "I can't believe I pulled that off," I thought, "I can't believe I went through with that" would be a song on the new record called "Internet Anonymity." It's basically about not being a dick on the internet. It's a silly concept for a song, but it's sung in earnest. Anyway, it contains probably my favorite line on the album: "You've got a big, fancy vocab, oh yeah, but I'm/ just not impressed by the ethos of your paradigm." I don't why, that just tickles me.

Do you ever get shit from apolitical pop-punk kids wondering why the hell you're singing lyrics like "It's applied so much more to those who are black and or poor / state sanctioned murder?"
There are people who don't care for politics in pop-punk, or in music in general, but we've never actually gotten any shit for it directly. Those people just don't buy our records. Our name actually deflects a lot of those people in the first place.

I guess that makes sense. And now thinking about it, have you ever had problems with people thinking with a name like Capitalist Kids that you're some kind of crusty d-beat band when you guys show up and start playing at a show? Cause I definitely didn't expect a band with your name to sound the way you do.
It's possible that that has happened, but no problems to report. If people see our t-shirt with the Capitalist Casualties font, it will confuse them even more.

Considering you drop some of the smartest lyrics in pop-punk, there's a serious amount of self-deprecation and self-loathing in some of your songs. Where's that coming from?
That's coming from inside my brain. It's not a very fun place to be most of the time. Although, for the record, the song "I'm a Nobody (and Everybody Knows It)" is not autobiographical; I just thought that was a clever title. The problem is that the "character" whose perspective the lyrics are written from is largely indistinguishable from myself, haha.

Now correct me if I'm wrong, but it seems that the Capitalist Kids identify as a socialist band. Most punk bands seem to drift a little further left into the radicalism of anarchism. What is it that draws you to the idea of the state? And how do you think that system would benefit people the most?
I think anarchism is great on a smaller scale, like a worker-owned co-op, and things like that could exist within a democratic socialist state. I want the state to be there to provide sensible regulations and health care and things like that. I can't stand the fact that we have a private, for-profit health care industry, and private, for-profit prisons—although, in a perfect Socialist world, we wouldn't have the prisons at all. I don't think government is the worst thing in the world, I just don't want it to be run by whoever can afford the most lobbyists. I think the most important change we could have in the country would be to have clean elections.

So what do you say to the people who feel that clean elections are impossible? That the state is only there to propagate itself, that it has absolutely no interest in supporting people? I know it's kind of ironic for me to say that as I literally live on the state via food stamps, but on the larger scale even that is being chipped away at. The way I see it, the only way for the state to be able to provide all the things that people need effectively is through a totalitarian or fascist system—which is definitely where our country is heading. Do you think there's a way our current government can save itself from itself?
First off, clean elections are not impossible; they already exist in several states and cities, and they are working. Getting it to the national level will obviously require a huge grassroots movement, but that's different from impossible. Our current government is fucked. The two-party system is a scam. The Republican party is such a nightmare that the Democrats can always get votes and donations just by not being Republicans. But they're terrible as well. As a result, the American people are not represented by their government, and that's why you have a 13% approval rating of Congress. Putting aside how people vote, if you look at individual issues, the majority of Americans are fairly progressive. We want universal health care, gay marriage, higher taxes on the wealthy, etc. We just aren't given any real choice. We need more parties—preferably with clean elections so they would stand a chance. The Socialist Alternative Party won an election in Seattle, and now they have a $15 minimum wage. Obviously that's not going to happen nation-wide overnight, if ever, but you never know what can happen. If more and more people start to wake up to the fact that Capitalism doesn't work, and they feel like there is actually a viable alternative, we could see a real change.

One thing that we can definitely agree on is that this country has become a plutocracy, if not a flat-out corporatocracy. You've addressed this idea in such songs as "Parachute of Gold," and "Never Fear, Capitalism Is Here!" The Surpreme Court of the US just ruled, again, in favor of corporations—this time holding in Burwell V. Hobby Lobby that corporations don't have to provide birth control based on their religious beliefs. What are your thoughts on this particular ruling?
There's a lot to hate about that ruling. The Supreme Court is pretty shitty these days. Corporations are people and money is speech. But I think one thing to consider here is that there's no reason for Americans' health care to be connected to their employment. It worked for our grandparents because they would often have one job their whole life. Our generation will have about 15-20 jobs. This country should have universal, single-payer health care, provided by the government. Then the patriarchal religious kooks at Hobby Lobby wouldn't have to worry about "abortifacients."
Any last things or people you want to mention, plug, or give a shout out to?
Like to say we're honored to be the first interview in the hottest new zine on the scene. Thanks for taking the time to ask us some questions.

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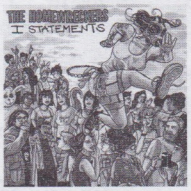

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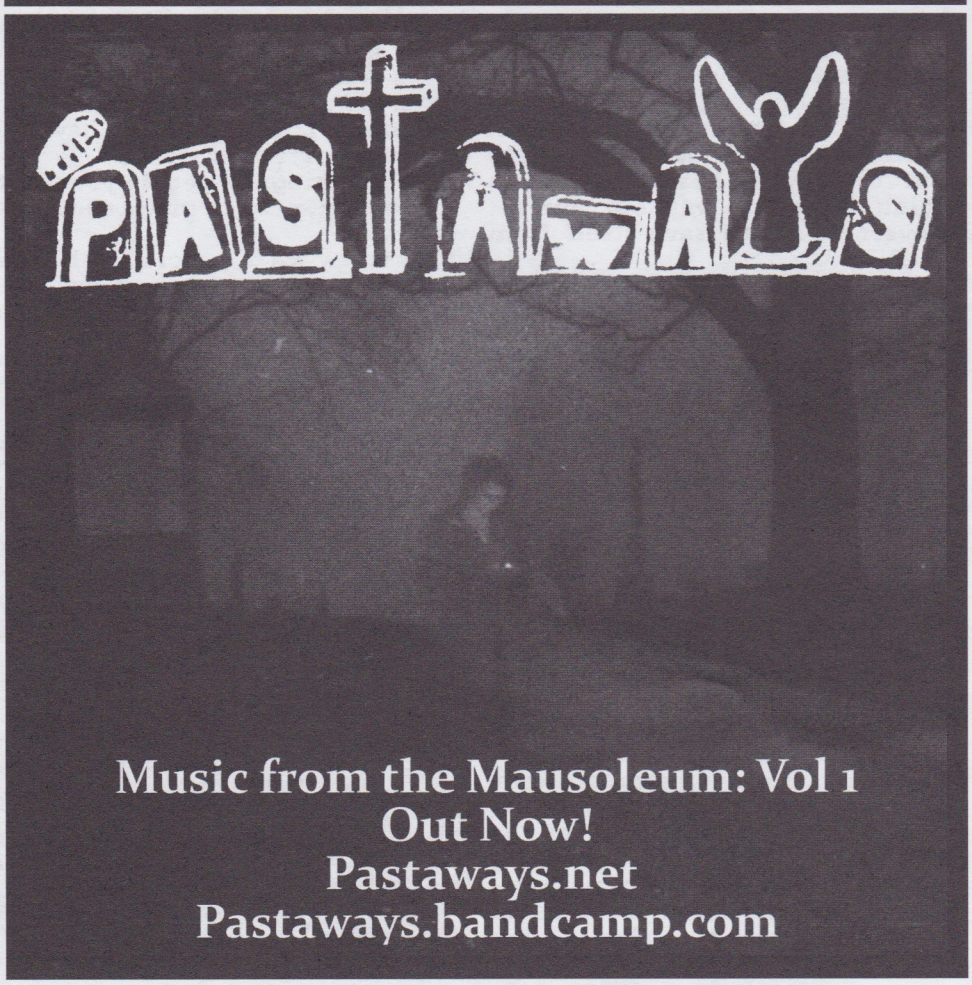

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THE SOCIALIST SOUND: RED SCARE IN 2015

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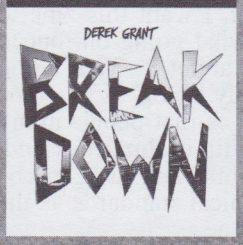

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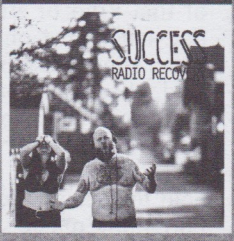

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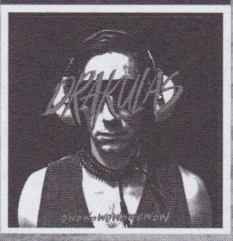
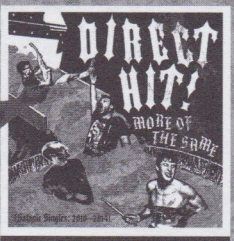


DRAKULAS
"OWOWOWOWOWOWOW" 7"/EP



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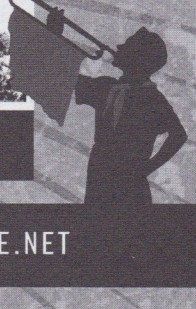

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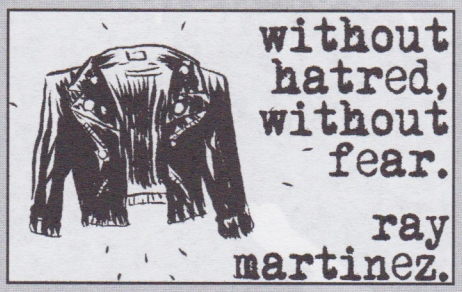
columns



For those of you reading this brand new zine that have no idea who I am, Hi, my name is Ray Martinez. I'm a Midwest punk who grew up not far outside of Chicago and spent a substantial amount of time in bucolic Carbondale, IL along with Milwaukee, WI. I moved to the San Francisco Bay Area in November of 2013, and up until mid-2014 was a coordinator of *Maximum Rocknroll*. For five months I was behind the curtain, seeing all that went in to making the sausage that is my all-time favorite zine. For reasons that are actually boring and not juicy or ripe for dramatic re-enactment I was asked to vacate the position and the lovely (and rent-free) bedroom at the *MRR* compound.

So here I am, back living in Chicago after 12 years away, pulling a late night column writing session in my room, but for a different publication—my own. Definitely feels strange. But at the same time, it also feels really great. Like I'm being sneaky–as if putting together a zine of my own would somehow be getting back at *MRR*. Which is fucking silly, I mean, I still write a monthly column for them.

But there is something new here—and you're holding it. Issue number one of *No Friends*. I'm incredibly excited to be putting together a new regular punk periodical. I've been excited about punk zines since I first laid eyes on a copy of *MRR* in 1995. Within a year I was making my own, albeit terrible, zine. Since then I've gone through periods of editing, or contributing, to small run xeroxed zines. In 2010 I applied to be a coordinator at *MRR*, hoping to make the jump to putting together the biggest and baddest punk zine ever. They didn't want me. But in 2013 they did. And luckily for all you readers, by 2014 they didn't again. At least as an editor.

No Friends is what happens after you see how the sausage is made. I've seen, and experienced, the horrors and joy of churning out a monthly punk zine that not only deals with the real time issue of publication, but with the insane weight of its own history. It's hard, if not impossible, to make changes to a 30+ year old magazine—even if you're a coordinator. And for better or worse, *MRR* keeps doing what it has always done. I love the zine still, though obviously I've got some ideas of my own. With *No Friends* I'm hoping to make a zine with all the far-fetched ideas I had for *MRR*, but also incorporate some other things I think would be great for a punk in 2015 to have that simply could never happen at *MRR*. So I'm going to admit it right now, that *MRR* is the reason why *No Friends* exists. In those few short months over there I learned a whole lot, and I want to take all the things I love(d) about that zine and expand on them in my own way with this one.

So here's to *MRR*—forever may it support and frustrate the punks around the world!

First things first, *No Friends* is an independent arts/DIY focused zine. The point of this publication is to showcase and explore the different things that punks—or people in the spirit of punk—do, which may or may not be punk rock music. While the focus of the zine will be primarily on music, we do want to have columns, interviews, and articles about all the other things people are into besides punk rock music. And there's a whole lot of that kind of stuff. I want this zine to not just report on what going on, but to have conversations about it. That being said, there's probably going to be some content in these pages that people aren't going to be happy with in Punkrockland. Some things that punks are into can't be held to the same ethical standards as the DIY punk music scene.

I'm sure that sentence right there bummed a lot of you out. But seriously, I'll just throw out the example of the film and television industries and leave it at that. Even to be a slight DIY purist would mean no more Simpsons quotes and Repo Man references for you, Johnny Punk Rules.

Also, no Facebook, Twitter, or Tumblr.

All I'm trying to say (rather glibly, I know) is that sometimes people do "sell out" DIY/independent punk, but instead of just adding their name to DIY Airlines no-fly list, I think that conversations about what went into the decision to go to a corporate distro'd label or major imprint were are vital to the growth and exploration of what makes the DIY/independent community what it is. That's where the ugly difficulties of our scene are, and that's where I want to stand—in the middle of confusion, trying to help figure it all out.

The only reason I say all of this is that I don't want someone later on down the road accusing me, or this zine, of betraying some sort of flag waving uber-punk code. Interviewing, or writing about a band or artist that now has dalliances with corporate money or interests isn't necessarily promoting them or supporting them.

Like the countless amazing zines that this one stands on the shoulders of, *No Friends* is a contributor based publication. That means *you*. We not only gladly accept, but are flat out asking for, anything you as a reader think other DIY minded folks would like to hear about. Does it have to be about punk? Not necessarily (though, yeah, it helps, but honestly, whatever). We want to hear what's going on in your circle, or your town. Does your roommate have an awesome tweepop project? Interview them and send it in! That girl you work with in the crushing D-beat band? Interview them! Read something in the news that pissed you off, or made you think? Write down your thoughts and send them to us! Did you read some music reviews about a genre or sub-genre that you thought were totally bullshit 'cause you're a walking encyclopedia of that info and think you could do a better job? Or you think we're only covering the crap of the crop? Drop us a line and tell us what labels and bands we should be scoping out and getting a hold of. Or better yet, send us some samples of your writing and possibly get on board as a reviewer or columnist. We want to hear about everything. To us punk is whatever is made by punks, even shit that isn't punk—and I'm pretty sure you know what I mean when I say that.

A couple of things that you'll notice right away about *No Friends* that's different from most other punk zines these days is that we review digital releases of music. Personally, I'm a casual record collector, but this zine is not for record collectors. This zine is about the culture and the music—and in 2015 the easiest, cheapest, and fastest way to get the music is digitally. We won't review any streams, but we will review anything that is downloadable. If our reviewers and readers can get a copy of the music, in any medium,

then we'll give it a listen and talk about it. The world is changing and people are becoming more and more accustomed to not having physical copies of music. It went from "Did you get the new XXX record," to "Did you hear the new XXX record?" Slight change linguistically, but giant culturally.

Also, I personally find it completely ridiculous, elitist, and frankly classist, to demand a physical copy of a piece of music in order to review it. I want *No Friends* to be able to review as many new bands and artists as possible, from all around the world. With postage rates going through the roof and production costs for vinyl soaring, there's simply a whole lot of music that isn't getting into some of the other bigger music zines. I think asking a bunch of poor folks living halfway across the world to drop $12 to ship us one of their 300 pressings so that it has the chance to be exposed to other people (quite possibly with a terrible review) fucking ridiculous. Email us a download link. Now no one has to worry for days or weeks about it being lost or destroyed in the post.

But if you'd like to send us a physical copy of the music, *please* do—some of us nerds would definitely love to have one.

Of course, just like with any other zine, we don't have to—and probably will not—review everything that people send us. Sorry. While our musical tent poles may be placed further out than other punk zines, there are still gonna be some things that just won't make into these pages. Who decides that? Well, me. I decide that. Don't like the way things are going on over here? Well, that's unfortunate and I very much encourage you to contribute—or start your own zine. I did. It rules.

The other thing we're doing is that we're gonna make every issue downloadable immediately. So if you're reading this in a bathroom in a punk house somewhere on tour, rest assured that you can get your own digital copy. Looking at the model of the record with download included, we're hoping to marry the inevitable shift to digital that media is making with the fact that holding actual stuff made by actual punks will always be cool. So if you buy a physical copy of this zine, you get a free digital copy. But if you just want a digital copy, you can get that too—and yes, it will be cheaper. Not free, but definitely cheaper than the print version. Punks like stuff—when the whole world said vinyl was dead 20 or so years ago us punks celebrated in the streets for all the fast turnover and cheap production costs record plants then had. The people who want to hold a zine, and save it, and fold it in their back pocket until they can stick it next to their toilet will have the chance to do that. But you'll also have the chance to read it surreptitiously on your computer at school or work, or on your smarty-pants phone. Everyone wins! Huzzah! *No Friends* just solved the death of zines and print media.

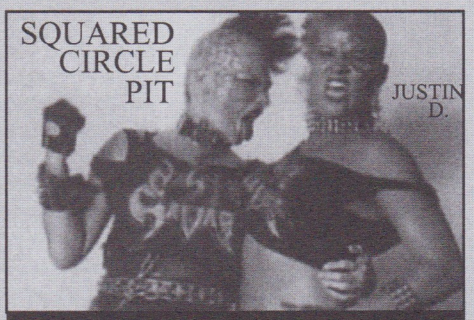
I'm sure you also noticed that this issue came with a flexi record. Pretty cool, huh? As another way we here at *No Friends* are solving the problem of the death of zines is to include a flexi with every issue of the magazine. Each flexi will have exclusive music from some of our favorite (and hopefully soon to be your favorite) artists. The only way to get this music is through picking up a physical copy of the zine. Not even the digital version will include the music. We figure, "hey, if you like zines, you probably like records... and we probably like you." So we, and the bands, would like to show our appreciation that you all will still pick up something tangible and real with... well, something tangible and real.

But here's the real point to this zine. *No Friends* is intended to be an ongoing conversation. We don't want to be historians, framing and contextualizing the things that pass through our pages. Time will do that for us. We want this (maga)zine to be a living, breathing, exchange of ideas that people with a similar—yet loose—set of ideals can use as a tool. We're not hoping to build anything, we're hoping that you can use us to build something. Something better, something you want to see exist on this ridiculous punishment orb we all are forced to inhabit. We all don't have to agree on everything. We probably won't. And frankly, I hope that we don't. I want to agree to disagree. I want people to accept the differences, but embrace the similarities. Punx is hippies, huh?

If you're still reading this jumbled introduction to the zine, you're a much more patient person than I. I'm pretty sure I tuned out about two paragraphs back myself. But anyway, thanks for picking this rag up, and I hope you enjoy it! It's a pretty scary thing to try to start a print periodical in 2015, but I believe in punk and the punks. More than anything, or anyone, else.

P.S.—Immense thanks to Ari Perezdiez, Fred Thrillhouse, Vanessa X, Eric Yee, Ben Smith, Daryl Gussin, Megan March-Mink, John Mink, and everyone else who started supporting this idea from the moment I brought it up and who, when this still could have just been a go-nowhere flight of fancy, gave their time and effort to make sure that this actually did happen. Double special thanks to Jim for moving from Milwaukee to Chicago to live at the *No Friends* House and co-edit this thing with me. Hopefully our cats will eventually get along as much as we do. Triple special thanks to Jamaal Harris for letting us turn our house into the *No Friends* HQ and trusting us enough to invite total strangers over. No thanks to Gifford Kasen, proof that there's a sucker born every day. Thanks for the money, dummy.

SQUARED CIRCLE PIT



All right ref—ring the bell! This column is dedicated to the King and Queen of Sports–Professional Wrestling. Yeah, I know it's *ahem* *staged*, but no more is it preplanned than a movie ending. Like music theres different points of entry for fans. I've got one part of me in the old-school—as I grew up first watching the Georgia Territory which was guys like Tommy "Wildfire" Rich, Buzz Sawyer and Mr. Wrestling II. Then another part of me is completely focused on current stuff like Ring of Honor, New Japan Pro Wrestling, Shimmer (the excellent women's independent promotion), a variety of indie federations and WWE. *No* other sport has also had fans that have traded tapes, made zines and used a wide variety of music styles for their performer intros. ECW's The Sandman used "Enter Sandman" *way* before Marino Rivera. Do ya think someone from the fucking Yankees would ever go into the crowd before hitting the mound and drink a sixer with the fans? I think *not*!

When Ray lived out in SF—he and I talked a *lot* about wrestling **[Hey, when I see someone walk into the *MRR* compound wearing a wrestling shirt, I'm gonna talk wrestling. It's obvious we both already like DIY punk.—Ray]**. I'm very thankful to be part of this new zine, and I hope this is one part (of many) that puts this over. One day we watched *The History of the World Wrestling Federation* or what I'd called "The WWE's version of their own history." I pointed out some flaws in their own historical revisionism and marked out for the part about WWF's takeover on WTBS aka: "Black Saturday." (For more on this see and listen to Fuck You Pay Me's killer song of the same name. "It's a losing battle taking on McMahon/Bill Watts learned the hard way that you can't fight the man.") Wrestling in the '70s and '80s was based in territories (Georgia, Mid-Atlantic, Portland, AWA, World Class, etc). The territory system was quite similar to a music scene in that each territory had its own promoter, its own champions, and its own regional TV show. By mid-1987 I had access to at least five different promotions on cable TV, and I also was able to learn more

through the Bill Apter magazines *Pro Wrestling Illustrated*, *The Wrestler*, etc., that covered action in Japan and Mexico.

Rusev Crush!

One thing that wrestling does well is the use, and re-use, of historical and political tropes —namely, the WWE's use of Russian-American political tensions. The recent rivalry between the Russians represented by behemoth Rusev and his manager/spokesperson, Lana, and "Real Americans" Jack Swagger and manager Zeb Coulter (aka: the legendary "Dirty" Dutch Mantell) on the American side, are a great example of an update of an old angle (or storyline). This angle is often compared to *Rocky IV*—with Rusev as Ivan Drago and Lana in the Ludmilla role. However, the iconography has changed a bit as it's now about a nationalist, oligarchic Russia instead of the Soviet Union. However, the story arch of this is still the same: foreign baddies trying to dominate American heroes. These baddies like their patriotic American counterparts have come up in many guises in wrestling history. This is also similar to the media paranoia and exaggeration as underscored in the Dead Kennedys' song, "Potshot Heard Around the World" where Jello sings, "Ever noticed news is staged like TV wrestling shows."

Soon You'll Feel the Wrath of Russia (aka: Other Cold War Feuds)

"The U.S.S.R. just fights us off / with their crazy words"—Witchfinder General, "Soviet Invasion"

"I think about 95% of the people that I end up speaking to today that recognize me as 'The Russian Bear' Ivan Koloff believe that I was born in Russia, raised in Russia and I represented Russia in my wrestling career,"—Ivan Koloff from the documentary *"Ivan Koloff: The Most Hated Man in America"*.We can turn the clock back to the 1980s and see the WWF's Cold War duo of Nikolai Volkoff and The Iron Sheik. This, of course, represented a duality of evil with the Soviet Russia and Iran playing out against "Real Americans" like Hulk Hogan. Journeyman, Boris Zukov also came into the fold in the mid-'80s AWA (Midwest territory) and late '80s WWF. Along with this the NWA/Jim Crockett territory in Atlanta had the trio of Ivan Koloff, Nikita Koloff and Krusher Kruschev. There were also predecessors to this such as Alexis Smirnoff who worked a lot in the old San Francisco territory in the '60s and '70s. Wrestling just echoed the Cold War paranoia of the time in the same way Rambo and Reagan did.

Prior to his move to the Jim Crockett/NWA territory Bill Watts' mid-'80s promotion UWF (Universal Wrestling Federation) also did an "evil Soviets" gimmick with Vladimir Petrov and Krusher Khruschev. There's even a current-era zine called Russian Flag Burial (http://www.russianflagburial.com/) which covers this territory along with other phenomena. Though, I'd have to say the NWA/Crockett version grabbed my attention the most with "The Russian Bear" Ivan Koloff and his nephew Nikita Koloff. Ivan and Nikita along with Khruschev became a Soviet trio of terror. The believability was deep among my friends and I as we rarely joked that these were all probably just some guys from North Carolina named Dave, John or Mike. My friend Danny (who I watched wrestling with growing up), even asked his dad if all Russians were bald, because he was so convinced by the visage of the Koloff's and Khruschev.

When I studied history I realized how genius this trio was: Ivan Koloff was the muscular Vladimir Lenin while Nikita and Khruschev's names were split between the former Cold War icon. Additionally, Nikita and Khruschev played the roles of Soviet skinhead brutes. While Khruschev was the backup muscle, Nikita was being primed as a future champion. His incredible best of seven matches with popular babyface Magnum T.A. is a must see.

"It's like professional wrestling with ties"—comedian Dana Gould on political TV debates.

With the new conflict in the WWE, there's a hardcore nationalism on the part of Lana who has shown her support for Vladimir Putin. Her arena intro is one that evokes a cinematic drama theme and could've easily been recorded by UK neo-classical duo, In the Nursery. She frequently talks about the "weakness of America." She even showed the goofy work out video of Obama to which she said, "The United States is led by a man that oozes weakness," and "Your leader is what we call a 'girly man,'" and then compared it to Putin looking bold over a "majestic" image of the Kremlin. All the while saying, "He is strong, he is virile...it's only a matter of time before the strength of your nation gives out—and the new power takes its place—*Mother Russia*!" This is all made a touch more believable by the fact that Lana is of Russian origins (despite the fact that she's really from *Florida*). Lana's promo from this episode of *Monday Night RAW* was posted on several conservative websites to show, "Look even the WWE hates Obama." Further anti-American furor came by way of Rusev's match with Big E. Langston (on October 20th, 2014's *Monday Night RAW*.) After the match and during Lana's promo against top face The Big Show—who Lana said, "Will be put in a circus where people will throw half-eaten food at him while he wallows in his own excrement." Rusev attempted to pull down the American flag and eventually kicked a Marine who ran in the ring to prevent him from "disrespecting America." This went down like a bad review of *American Sniper* on Fox News.

Next time I'll cover women in wrestling, more punk'n'wrestling history, and Middle Eastern wrestlers

END NOTES:

1: WWF changed to WWE in 2002 due to a legal battle with the World Wide Fund for Nature, and additionally Vince McMahon My friend MC Odnet who often let me guest on his hip-hop show on Stanford radio's KZSU during the time of this news—refused to read the public service announcement for the World Wildlife Fund because of this. Talk about living the gimmick. Anyway, the WWE stands for World Wrestling Entertainment. McMahon and company have a history of not calling his company's product a sport in part to get around tax laws and other regulations. Thus the "E" stands for Entertainment even though "wrestling" is still in their name. As much as I love the sport and spectacle, I have a *lot* of problems with its anti-union stance and some of the super shitty angles—especially some WWF-WWE did in 2001-2010, and in WCW's final year. But there's also some garbage in the indie feds like—a death match/lightbulb smashing fetishist cretin named Wife-beater from Combat Zone Wrestling.

2: I also have an issue with the WWE's version of wrestling history because I hate monopoly capitalism and their attitude of "the victors write the history" bullshit. However, their "Roundtables" they've done with Jim Ross, Dusty Rhodes and Michael Hayes tend to counteract that.

3: Despite the WWE becoming the "top dog" after the Monday Night Wars of the late-'90s/early '00s, they're not the only game in town. A few weeks before I wrote this, New Japan just showed how much better they are by putting on a for more sport-based pay-per-view with their excellent *Wrestle Kingdom 9* broadcast with ex-WWE announcers, Matt Striker and the legendary Jim Ross. Additionally, like music, there's a variety of independent promotions—from the comedy/comic book styles of Chikara to the traditional, mid-size regional of ROH, to the lucha style of Revolution (California), to a massive amount of indie promotions in Norway, South Africa and Israel. Hence, wrestling—like punk—is international and can be done on a big level and a smaller level.

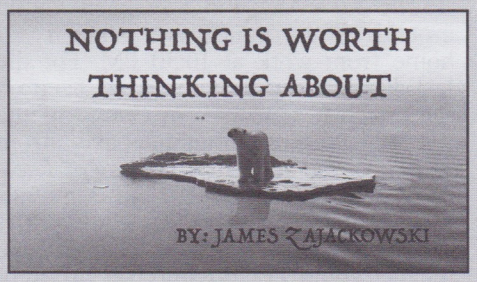
4: Zeb Coulter's gimmick name was based off of Ann Coulter. "Dirty" Dutch Mantell was a great heel in territories ranging from Puerto Rico to Memphis. His Memphis feuds with Randy Savage and Jerry Lawler are incredible. His image from his in ring days also shows up on punk forum *Terminal Boredom* user Layaway Butch's profile.

5: Ivan Koloff was a really hairy dude and "The Russian Bear" moniker could have easily been applied to him if he

hung out at leather bars. Same goes with Dutch Mantell and his crazy back hair.

6: Krusher Kruschev is also known as Barry Darsow, who later was part of late '80s top WWF team Demolition—as well as a ton of other not-so popular gimmicks such as Repo Man, Blacktop Bully, and Mr. Hole-in-One.

See you at the matches! http://squaredcirclepit.blogspot.com



screen print. I had dabbled with it in high school, but that was many lifetimes ago. Originally, I just wanted to make a few shirts for my band. There was nothing else behind the idea. I needed productive activities to coincide with my drinking.

Pretty easy. The whole process was pretty easy too.

I built a frame, bought some chemicals, made a design that I liked. I burned a screen with a simple work lamp. Forty-two minutes. Nailed it on the first shot. I got some shirts from the thrift store, and I bought some cheap new shirts from Walgreens.

I got drunk and printed some shirts. The whole process was smooth as hell. I did it all in my house with about $50 worth of materials.

At no point in the process did I stop to question why I was doing what I was doing. It was great. It felt amazing. Making things, making whatever, is a beautiful endeavor—as long as you don't think about it. Life gets messy quick if you stop and ask yourself what you're doing.

The band played a bunch of shows. I mostly gave the shirts away because it felt strange taking money for something I had done purely for the joy of doing it. Also, I burnt a few trying to cure them in my oven.

I made some screens for other bands. I made some art pieces. I kept drinking, kept printing.

Then one day I had a brilliant idea. Or what I thought was a brilliant idea. This momentary brilliance, however, would be integral in my mental unraveling.

The band is not overtly political, but individually we all hold radical and enduring beliefs. I wanted to create a design that had a more overt political message to give more meaning to the shirts. It seemed pointless to keep printing shirts that essentially advertise the stupid band. I have a hundred or so band shirts. Don't get me wrong, I love bands, but I wanted to do more with it.

Anyway, I focused on the idea of legalization of marijuana. It's an easy cause to get behind and an important one.

In most places, the issue is nearly concluded, I understand. However, in the state of Wisconsin, we are apparently moving backwards in everything.

The whole notion seems inevitable, but it appears to be years off.

What is the point of making a shirt about an issue that has more or less been decided? What is the point of making shirts at all? Who the fuck cares about t-shirts anymore?

I trudged through these momentary doubts. I burned a screen. It's a simple concept. It's a large plus sign, modeled after the green plus you see outside dispensaries in more liberal parts of the country.

This symbol is perfectly meaningless in Wisconsin as of right now, except in the minds of those who know. It has the potential to be an identifying symbol, a quiet mark of solidarity.

Somewhere along the line, doubt coagulated in my mind. If it's a foregone thing, why should I bother? I am certain that time will carry the torch on this issue. Old people will die and the stigma will go with them, and everyone will be safely blazing at the bus stop and church and wherever else.

So now I am stuck. I have a screen. I have shirts. I have glow-in-the-dark green ink. All these things seem to make sense in my head in one way or another. But that head is also clouded with that doubt. There are many things battling it out up there.

First of all, the shirts themselves are probably all made by children. This disturbs me. I don't know why I didn't consider it when I purchased these shirts, but it's really messing with me today. The whole idea is to promote liberty. To do so with these sweatshop shirts seems hypocritical and disgusting. I have a lot of thoughts on this matter, and none of them are clear or cogent. Certainly, kids should be in school and not working long hours in dangerous conditions for slave wages. The fifty blank shirts I have are obviously a small part of that, but a part nonetheless.

Secondly, the real life implications of legalization are a total mindfuck. The prison system should be dismantled. Drug offenders should be freed immediately, and the money that currently goes to the prisons should go to programs for the people. Duh. But this is capitalist America.

Prohibition has been devastating poor people, especially people of color. What is truly infuriating is that after legalization, rich white people are poised to begin making enormous amounts of money from a marketplace that has been used by the state to incarcerate and destabilize communities. Meanwhile, those communities will continue to suffer as that money is extracted entirely.

Thirdly, I don't know if anyone will wear these shirts. The band shirts, I never really cared. It was something I made and I had pride in the idea. These political shirts have a very specific purpose. If people don't wear them, they fail to serve that purpose.

So I'm stuck here, with this idea. Halfway through it all. Potentiality is kicking me in the head. What is truly worth doing for the sake of doing? I have no idea. That part of me has died somehow, and I miss it so very much.

On the flip side, there is the potential for absolutely nothing to come of this mess, I could flounder indefinitely with a box full of shirts and a screen. That phrase keeps rolling around in the depths of my mind, motivating me ever so gently to fight against the void: Nothing *is* worth thinking about. Nothing *is* worth fighting against.

There is inherent value in doing something, regardless of the outcome, as long as the intentions are positive. I refuse to live in the other world.

"Science and religion are
not mutually exclusive
In fact for better understanding we take
the facts of science and apply them"
-Screeching Weasel, "Science of Myth"

#hailsagan means more to me than some dumb hashtag, I have embraced it as a way of life. Along with *nullis in verba* (roughly translated to "on the word of no one" or "take nobody's word for it") these have become the ethos or mantra by which I live. It means never taking anyone's word for it unless they can back it up, don't give in, don't give up.

As a punk and a human being I am constantly met with contention and confrontation, of the mind or the person. The world we live in today is a weird and messy place and one will go completely insane if you don't find the way to survive and live in it. One person that I have looked to for encouragement and advice ever since I saw him on the Charles Kuralt show when I was a small child, is Carl Sagan.

If you're not familiar, Carl Sagan was an astronomer, cosmologist, astrophysicist, astrobiologist and communicator in astronomy and other natural sciences. Sagan assembled the first physical

messages that were sent into space: the Pioneer Plaque and the Voyager Golden Record, universal messages that could potentially be understood by any extra-terrestrial intelligence that might find them.

To me, he is the closest thing to a spiritual being that ever existed on our planet, a person who truly wanted to understand life and make it better and surprisingly a fucking *punk*.

Sagan butted heads with everyone from politicians, religious leaders, communists, democrats, republicans, Christians, Jews, his wives, his children, his family, other scientists, NASA, believers, non-believers and more. His "punk" ways can be summed up in this quote from his interview with Charlie Rose: "Science is more than a body of knowledge. It is a way of thinking; a way of skeptically interrogating the universe with a fine understanding of human fallibility. If we are not able to ask skeptical questions, to interrogate those who tell us that something is true, to be skeptical of those in authority, then, we are up for grabs for the next charlatan (political or religious) who comes rambling along."

If you don't think those are the words of a true punk, maybe you need to reanalyze what kind of punk you really are. Well… being a punk can have a ton of meanings, so I don't wanna get ahead of myself but you get the idea. He stood up for what he believed no matter who he had to fight, he had original ideas and made sure as many people heard about them as possible, he wasn't afraid to take a stand no matter how unpopular it might have been.

In my opinion, being a punk means finding absolute meaning in everything around you and leaving out or kicking out everything else that is against what you believe or that has no place in your life. It's very zen if you feel like thinking about it(most people don't). We as punks have a duty to *question everything*, we must use our voices and our passions to show the world how truly fucked up it is and hold a mirror to everyone that doesn't have their head on straight. Yes, we are also inclusive and provide a shelter for those that have no place or haven't found their place yet but we also have a civic duty to help our fellow man. Carl Sagan had the same beliefs.

"Widespread intellectual and moral docility may be convenient for leaders in the short term, but it is suicidal for nations in the long term. One of the criteria for national leadership should therefore be a talent for understanding, encouraging, and making constructive use of vigorous criticism."—Carl Sagan

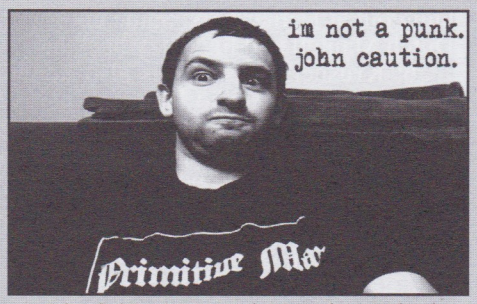
Sagan was always thought of as a free thinker or a skeptic; one of his most famous quotes, in *Cosmos*, was, "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence" (called the "Sagan Standard"). This is something that I have always lived by in my own life and encouraged those around me to live by, as well. Show me respect and you will get respect (something I learned a lot from my Bosnian friends too), show me proof and I will believe in what it is you are trying to tell me, "knuck up or buck up" Crime Mob (not the punkest, I know, but *what is punk*, really?)

The *punk* subculture, which centers on *punk* rock music, includes a diverse array of ideologies, fashions and forms of expression, including visual art, dance, literature and film. The subculture is largely characterized by anti-establishment views and the promotion of individual freedom.

Putting definitions on things is lame and never encapsulates the whole of a situation. Punk doesn't have to revolve around music. I wish it *would*... but it can't. You don't have to be a spiky jacket to be a punk, you don't have to love Rancid to be a punk, some of the punkest people I know get up every morning and work hard and go to their shitty job to make money to put out records, or drive a shitty van to play their songs, or build bicycles, or pour beer. It doesn't matter what you look like, listen to, smell like, as long as you *feel* the same, have the same ideas, convictions, concern and awareness for change. You need an attitude, you need morals, you need thoughts, you need anger, you need suspicion, you need all of these things to *feel* like a human being *and* a punk.

I don't intend to lecture here, but rather show what a great man and a great punk Carl Sagan was on this, the 17th anniversary of his death. He had thoughts that at the time were mostly ignored or cast aside as kookoo. His beliefs and thinking on animal rights, marijuana rights, race relations, climate change, religion, extraterrestrials, time travel, and more are things that we are still fighting for and don't entirely understand as a society today. If Sagan were still around he would no doubt be on the front lines fighting for all of this. It is my belief that he would have hopefully found his way into the government side of things in order to make *real* change and not give in to the almighty dollar and not give up on his fight for what is *real* and right. He had scientific proof in the 1970s that is still applied to arguments today, he had more information than a lot of congress has now forty years later. Sagan truly fought for what was right and didn't give a fuck who his opposition was because he knew in his back pocket he had the truth, he had facts, he had honesty, he had fire, he had never ending spirit, he would get kicked down and get right back up. Carl Sagan was a punk.

"Imagination will often carry us to worlds that never were. But without it we go nowhere."—Carl Sagan



It's 3:07 AM and I've been lazing around on my couch ever since I got home from work at 10:30 PM. For the last 4 hours, my roommate has been on the couch next to me, in charge of the remote, flipping simultaneously from *Rookie of the Year*, to *A League of Their Own*, to *Eyes Wide Shut*, all 3 movies playing uncensored on cable tonight. I started to think to myself "These three movies could not possibly be different from one another, but at least the first two are about baseball."

Then I started to think about the single life, and how this very thought process and act of watching incomplete movies on cable truly exemplifies an unattached, non-committed life entirely. To top it off, there is an empty aluminum pie tin on the coffee table next to me, littered with crumbs from a chocolate crème pie that once was. I ate that pie when I got home and prioritized actually eating food second to that. I'm just sitting here irresponsibly wasting away my evening, instead of going to sleep and possibly waking up early enough to do something productive with my morning tomorrow. And I'm loving every single minute of that freedom to make the wrong decision. I'm loving every single aspect of not giving a fuck. I'm loving every single aspect of not having to answer to anybody, no matter how much they might have not judged me in the first place. This life I'm living tonight, if you could call it that, is only mine to live.

You see, earlier in 2015, I was engaged to be married to a beautiful, wonderful girl who I had spent seven years with prior. She and I loved each other, and we were really the two best friends anybody could ever have. We were closer than I thought was possible. Unfortunately, it just didn't work out in the end. And that's all I'll say about it in this setting. It just didn't work out, and we are no longer together. But I miss her every day and its nights like this that I forget that I do. I am currently living out my dream of watching movies that I don't really care about on TV and eating pie for dinner. It's a dream, and I'm living it. It's my dream to live. Real productive, right?

But there are times when I don't forget that I miss her. There are times when it is painfully obvious that I once had something that made my life more complete than it is now.

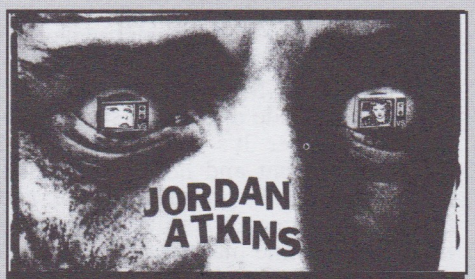
Recently, a young man was assault-

ed at a hardcore show and beaten within an inch of his life. Those responsible carried out a ruthless attack that I do not fully understand based on the explanations/reasons given. Without focusing too much on what happened, the bottom line is that a human being is in the hospital and his parents/friends are not sure exactly how this is going to turn out for anybody. This senseless violence happened within the hardcore scene. I'm not saying that it happened because of hardcore itself, but it definitely happened within the scene and it can be argued that the structure of our community put the victim and his attacker in the positions they were in. While my main focus since this happened has been supporting the victims and forming my own opinions regarding how I feel about the situation itself, honestly the first thing that I thought of when it all happened was my ex-girlfriend and my past relationship that just ended.

It's trying times like these that make me remember that I miss her and what we had together. When I see an example of just how fucked up our society is, even within the hardcore scene, and the damage it can cause. When I see how brutal human beings can be towards one another. When I see criminal behavior, violence, and hate. When I see these terrible, upsetting things, I remember what it was like to come home at the end of the day and know there was someone waiting there to love me, and to give that love right back to them. I remember what it was like to always have that one person on your side, no matter how fucked up everything else about life had gotten. I remember how it felt to always know that there was someone else who "got it", "it" being just how I felt about life and how we felt about each other in that life. To have that kind of love/companionship and then to lose it…is really made to feel all the more real when you are reminded of how that comfort was able to get you through the negative aspects of life.

Originally, I had written a very cliché, cheesy piece about "scene unity" for this zine. It was chock full of jokes and slogans, and all it really did was preach something that I've always felt passionate about: everybody getting along, respecting each other, and embracing our differences in hardcore instead of stepping all over them. I decided at the very last minute to write something new because honestly I am just not feeling too positive about hardcore or life right now. I know the violent incident that I spoke of earlier is still fresh, and I will eventually understand the positive aspects of hardcore again once the initial shock has worn off. I also know that I am still not whole from the loss of my relationship and I will eventually see life in a more fulfilling way once I have had more time to move on. But between the terror of something like this being able to happen to an innocent person in our hardcore scene (or anywhere in the world for that matter), and the connection I made to the loneliness I've felt since my relationship ended, I just really did not want to write a positive, cheerful piece about hardcore or life. It did not feel sincere to put those ideas out there during this time.

This article is more so coming from a place of disappointment and sadness, but maybe it can end more positive like I had originally intended. I would like to think that everything gets better and life goes on. I know it does. I think there is something positive that can come from seeing something terrible happen to your fellow man, and from ending a long-term relationship with someone you love. I think the motivation to pick up the pieces and strive for happiness is what can come from the negative aspects of life. I know that life is what I make of it, and so is life for all of us as individuals and the life we share together. Please just always believe in yourself and respect others. Be nice and kind to one another. Don't glorify violence or sadness. Try to be positive and always strive for something better. Appreciate the people in your life that love you and respect you and care for you. It is a gift that shouldn't be taken for granted.



Having just seen the recent incarnation of Poison Idea play on March 12, 2015, it brought back a flood of punishingly drunken memories and ugly times. My first adventure seeing the Mating Walrus was a one-off show on New Years Eve 2001 in Austin, TX.

So I end up driving about 120 miles into town from a shithole place called College Station where I was visiting my family for Christ's annual B-day bash. Descending on 6th street too early to really do anything and with nothing open yet to celebrate on party central... I find myself sitting in my car for the few hours before the doors open at Emo's. Having to piss like a race horse, I jump to the back seat of my family's inherited Buick to unload in an old cup of Diet Dr. Pepper. It didn't seem feasible to publicly relieve my bladder pressure any other way as thousands of pre-drunk cowboy zombies start to infest the whole area. Feeling the ending wave of satisfaction as I tap out the last drop in the cup... "Bam, bam, bam!" A forceful knock on the back window occurs. Thankfully the back windows are tinted like a pimp, so I scramble to push my dick in my pants and throw my shirt over my unzipped pants. As I roll down the window, careful to not spill the cup-o-piss, I gaze in glory to Austin's finest Pig-Cop looking down at me. "Excuse me sir, have you been drinking in your car?" Which in all honestly, I should have been doing... "Ahhh, no. Just back here drinking, ah... Dr. Pepper," I muttered as I look down at the cup still sitting in my hand. "Why are you in the back seat of your car, sir? And can I please see the beverage in your hand?" At this point, another pig is looking in the car with a flashlight over the talking Pig's shoulder. "Ahh, sure...." I hand them my license, my cup of sweat-pee tea, and I spew out some convoluted story about napping in the back seat before the show. They talk just out of earshot as I sit there waiting. At this moment, I carefully zip up my pants as discreetly as possible… don't want the pigs to think I was jerking on 6th Street. Fuck me, I have wanted to see Poison Idea for years... even got the skull from *Kings of Punk* tattooed on my arm like a fan-boy. And now, I'm about to get pinched and miss them play Texas for the first time over this shit!?! A few more minutes pass. Finally the Piggers come to the car, hand me back the Dr. Piss-pepper cup, my license, and tell me, "Have a safe night, sir." Darby Crash rides again!

I dump the cup and make my way into the club. Jack Control is sitting at the door of Emo's, and I tell him my horrid little story (which by appearances, he doesn't appear to believe a word of). Really, it's damn time to hit the bar to enjoy some libations as the opening bands start to pound away. Finally it becomes Poison Idea's turn, I get a prime spot up front and watch in utter horror as Pig Champion struggles to have his shaky knees fight his mass step-by-step up the 8 or so steps to the side of the stage (to be honest, he looked skinnier but more pale and sickly than I would have imagined). Poison Idea fucking rip though an amazing mix of early-to-mid-to-late era madness of their exquisite catalog. Finally hitting their encore, they tear into songs from the monster that is the *Pick Your King* EP. It's at this fine moment, I lose it altogether and lunge my fat ass on stage. In those few nanoseconds, I look down at the circling punks dancing feverishly and dive directly into it. For reference, I'm just a pinch under 6'2" and in the plus range of 200 lbs. I have avoided stage diving for the majority of my punk life with regards to other punks who may become hospitalized having my dimpled-ass land on their heads. But I did it this time... and as I hurl myself into the mass of punks, everything suddenly goes silent as my face connects with cold hard concrete. I awake to being dragged by my shoulders towards the restrooms, "Man, are you alright? Fuck, you need to look at your-

self" says the dude who drags me. Now some pretty intense pain starts to creep into my facial area. Stumbling my way into the restroom, I find an inch of space in the restroom mirror that isn't covered by shitty band stickers… and gape at my bloody face as I peel my top lip off the shattered fragments of what used to be my two front teeth. Spitting and puking in the trash, I hobble out of the restroom to the last few songs and take myself out of the club. I felt the darkness driving back to College Station that night...and my New Year chimed in with two and half grand in dental surgery and a maxed out credit card. Blank Blackout Vacant.

Recent records that are worth your time:

LOCKJAW—*Shock Value* and *Dead Friends* EPs (reissues). Great, raw hardcore punk from early '80s Portland. Mega rare so get on this!

MERCY KILLINGS—*Snuffed Out* EP—maxed out anger! Not for the weak, hardcore from VA.

PRAG—*Prag* EP—Noise inducted hardcore from Australia done perfectly!

PURA MANIA—*La Estafa Musical* and *Musica Para Genta Fea* EPs—from Vancouver, BC… amazing Oi influenced punk that has an early '80s South American or Spanish sound. Essential records!

NARCOLEPTICS—*Narcoleptics* EP- NYC band by way of Chicago that plays noisy D-beat punk with massive and dense hooks.

IMPALERS—*Psychedelic Snutskallar* 12"- one of the best bands in the USA right now... favorite record of 2014.

PILLAGE—*Pillage* EP- Out of Chicago, perfect blend aggro-hardcore and power-violence… so mean, it will take your lunch money.

It's Monday. My car is dead. Tsarnaev is sentenced to death, and I'm sitting in my apartment reading about head gaskets, radiator hoses and a bunch of other crap I can't afford to fix. But at least I have a van. And it's been said that a man without a van is just a man.

I gave up pizza driving, it's not a sustainable thing for me. It never sat right with me that a job that requires the use of your personal vehicle also pays you minimum wage. It also never sat right with me that we are forced to rely on the kindness of complete strangers to earn a living, strangers who often have no clue how to properly assign a dollar amount that is equivalent to how much it sucks to get in your car, go to the pizza shop, pick it up yourself and keep it warm all the way to your door. For a stupid amount of people out there this is worth two bucks, and the frequency of crap tips cranks up as the address becomes more affluent. Gas was $3.85 a gallon last summer. It's worth at least that. I'm pretty sure your one-bedroom costs about $1,400 a monh, but you don't have five bucks—and you're wasted, no you're nodding out, this is great.

Not that we were talking about bourgeois bullshit, but why is the richest side of town the whitest and the black side of town the poorest? Why do I have to explain to every old friend from the small town world that it's alright to acknowledge that racism exists? Again and again I see awful videos that prove all cops are bastards, specifically the ones with unarmed black men in them getting shot for no legitimate reason by any stretch of the imagination, and I don't see enough being done about it by our elected officials in America, or enough fucks given by people I know from the small town I grew up in. How can this just persist and everyone feel so-so about it?

I thought about that a lot driving around as I watched high-end consumerism and increasing exclusivity play out on the sidewalks, in the shops and prefab highrises of Minneapolis. This used to be a rough side of town in spots. People say it's safer. It's just money. All of this development and homogeneity has excluded an entire group of people, and that group of people are under a certain line, and that line that ticks up as wages stay the same. Good people get shoved out of neighborhoods they've been in for 15 years because a city decided to let developers do whatever they want, all in the name of increasing the monetary value of an area. Is that our city's fate, that all the nice places to live will be rich and white?

So, good news, I have observed that ethic of a living wage as a minimum wage is resonating with more and more people every day, and when that goal is achieved it will help mitigate the effects of the big G. But we have a lot of work to do in other areas too, which means there are a lot of places each of us can make a real and positive difference. It seems lost on our generation that marching in the streets can actually change things, but it can and it's going to be needed. I don't blame anyone for not wanting to vote. I don't like how limited our choices are either, but with action we can fix that too.

I think it's time some of us in this wide-ranging punk scene started stepping out and speaking up about issues that affect everyone, because I see it working. I see more people speaking up all the time. We need community leaders bringing forward ideas to the people we know who aren't hip to all this depressing America shit. Because the only way I have found to get people to wake up at all is to offend their understanding of the made up world they live in, which starts a process that may or may not lead to some critical thinking on the part of the offended.

Speaking out can come with a cost. It is often a loss of social status. Most of us don't like unpleasant facts or politics in general. Many of us regard the entire process as a god damn waste of time. And when we see others spouting off on Facebook about issues we're either unfamiliar with or opposed to because of our own understanding of them we can get turned off rather quickly. I'm guilty of both; yelling at clouds and hiding the status updates of old friends who get their worldview from cereal boxes.

But none of that erases the importance of the issues at hand. We have real and present dangers to face, not just dangers to this silly idea called America, but to the spaceship every human being lives on. The real fight is going to be in reclaiming all the waste humanity has produced, and halting completely all development of energy sources that are killing the Earth. It is in particular because of our passive nature on talking about and engaging with politics the resources of this planet have fallen into the hands of the increasingly few. If we don't want this to continue, we can no longer be so concerned with offending anyone's sensibilities.

I think our voices matter more than we think, especially when backed up by solid reason and ethics. I have pissed off a number of people, only to see them later coming around to new, radical ideas that resonate with them. I have at times embarrassed myself through a lack of clarity or improper tone (seriously, fuck communicating on the internet), but there are no bridges that have been so thoroughly scorched that I have not been able to rebuild them.

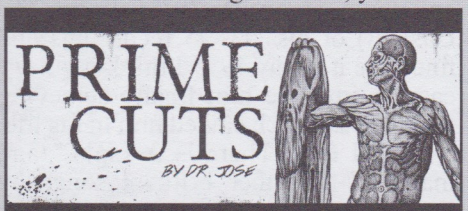
I have, through marching in the streets, shouting chants, and holding picket signs, seen the fruits of my labor rewarded when my city put a $15 minimum wage on its agenda for the year. I have seen issues and movements take center stage in the mainstream media that had no importance to them until millions across the country showed them that black lives matter, that women deserve equal pay for equal work and god dammit just equality period, that the XL pipeline is solely for the benefit of impossibly huge corporations, and that inequality is the bane of humanity.

We even have a socialist running for president, which is nice.

But hey, if you're getting down, don't. It works for me to remember that I am alive in a time where we are, in fact, vis-

iting other worlds. On top of that the light sail is launching next year for real and I think we're close to a living wage for everyone. I think people are starting to come to terms with believing in change. Maybe someday we can get this equality thing sorted and start a new chapter of humanity, a chapter we can actually call progress.

Also, NASA is probably quietly working on a warp engine so... go watch some Star Trek and get stoked, y'all.



The First Cut Is The Deepest.

The first horror movie I remember seeing was David Cronenberg's *The Brood*. Well, it was either that or *Friday the 13th VI: Jason Lives*. Hard to say after all these years. All I know is: either movie would be a heavy enough watch for even the most seasoned gorehound, let alone a five year old. See, I grew up in one of those households where my folks didn't really mind what I was watching as long as they were watching it with me. And of course, I was encouraged to ask questions. And they would constantly re-enforce that, y'know, it was "only a movie"—the kinda stuff you gotta say when you're a parent. My house was the one all my friends would come to if they wanted to watch something they couldn't at home, or play video games, or eat junk food. My house was "that house"; my parents were the "cool" parents. It was great—but I'm getting off track.

The Brood and *Friday the 13th VI: Jason Lives* were the first movies I ever *remember* seeing. I'm sure I had seen other films before them, *regular films*, but those didn't matter. Up until that point, nothing else had burned such a deep scar in my brain, left such an indelible impression on me as those two flicks. I do remember seeing *UHF* at the theater about a year later, with my mom and cousin, but that's a memory for a different time and a different zine.

The Brood. That one's a doozy. I recall, quite vividly, a coven of towheaded demon children, dressed in winter coats. They stalked a little girl, a girl who looked to be around my age at the time. A few of these hell spawn walked with her, hand-in-hand, down a long and snowy, desolate country road. Eventually, after the little girl breaks away and as the movie reaches a climax, I *definitely* remember a scene where the little, balled-up fists of these tiny creatures, drum and bang on a door the innocent girl is locked behind. They bang and beat until their fists begin to bleed and smear blood across the door. They continue to pound until, sure enough, they bust through the door and grab the little girl. I stood in front of the living room table, watching this unfold on the television screen while my mom and sister—whose idea it was to watch the film in the first place—sat behind me, on the couch, gasping and chuckling. Eating snacks, no doubt. But me, I wasn't gasping, or laughing, or snacking. I was frozen, terrified, in awe, my eyes fixed. I had many questions for mom and sis after that one.

Around the same time, we watched *Friday the 13th VI: Jason Lives*, which is the lightest in tone of all the *Friday the 13th* films. I remember, once again, my sister laughing. I was watching people being slaughtered and dismembered by some undead dude in a hockey mask, and yet my sister was laughing, enjoying, having a good time. I didn't understand, but something interesting was starting to happen. Even though they terrified me and confused me, I was starting to fall in love with horror movies. And damn if that hockey mask wasn't the coolest thing I'd ever seen.

In 1988, my sister took me to the movies to see *Child's Play*. I still remember coming home, and being briefly overcome with terror as we ascended the steps to our apartment. I'm sure it had plenty to do with the film we'd just seen, but just as soon as the feeling came, it went. And I was okay. And we came into the apartment, and we went into the kitchen where my mom was making dinner.

"How'd you like it?" she asked.

"It was good." I said, and goddamn it, I meant it.

Of course, one day soon after that, my mom returned from the video store and explained to me that they were selling a Chucky doll, just like the one in the movie. She asked if I wanted it, and in my most desperate (and possibly first-ever) attempt of lying-about-something-that-scares-me-while-trying-to-be-cool-about-it, I said, "Naw, that's okay." Bet that thing would eBay for a pretty penny today. Alas.

During that same time period, me and my cousins came into possession of a copy of *A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors*. It had either been copied from another tape, or recorded straight from TV because the audio and visuals were *terrible*. Super warped and degraded. Muffled voices, distorted music, incredibly dark and foggy imagery, artifacts, tracking lines, static, the whole nine. The scene I recall us watching over and over is one where some of the teen patients at the hospital have a group hypnosis session that goes to shit when Freddy Krueger shows up. The room starts to boil, the floor and walls start to crack, steam and red lighting abound. But this scene, as intense as it was in its own design, was amplified tenfold by the hellish tics and warps and warbles that the crap-quality tape provided. Aside from that scene, I kinda blocked the whole movie out due to it being so hard to comprehend. Years later however, I viewed a clean copy of the movie and I loved it. Even though the hypnosis scene was intact and presented in its original intended format this time around, I was still reminded of the earlier, version I'd seen. Actually, the more I think about it, the more I think I prefer that first version.

I saw *Hellraiser* for the first time around then in a very similar fashion. On a tape, copied from some other source. And while it was a bit degraded, it wasn't as bad as the *Nightmare On Elm Street 3* copy was. But then again, considering the horrific imagery contained in *Hellraiser*, it didn't need to be.

And there was the first time I heard the 1954 tune "Mr. Sandman" by the Chordettes. The song, as many know, pops up at the end of *Halloween II*, right after Laurie Strode escapes the hospital explosion that claims Dr. Loomis and her brother—unstoppable murderer and noted William Shatner fan—Michael Myers. It's such a strange, upbeat and haunting choice to end the contemporary horror film. I'll never forget my mom and dad singing along to the tune while a shot of Michael Myers mask burning slowly faded to black.

I remember reading and collecting *Fangoria* and the now defunct *GoreZone Magazine*, starting around the time I was six. Whenever my mom would take me along to go shopping at Kroger, I'd go straight to the magazine aisle and pick them out. They'd occasionally run these completely demented comic strips in the back. One was about kids catching drops of a fat lady's sweat on a summer day. Another was about a seemingly normal serial killer murdering his neighbor's dog. I know it sounds strange because here I was reading these graphic, gory mags that were beyond questionable for a kid my age to be looking at, but there was something that just stood out to me about these comics. Something that made me think, "Man, whoever makes these magazines must be *really twisted* to include gruesome *comics*." They were too freaky for me. I mentioned it in passing to my mom, who was looking at magazines with me. I told her the images scared me, to which she replied, "I think that's the last time we should buy you those magazines." And that was the first time I learned to keep my mouth shut about it.

I'll never forget, decades later as a full-grown adult, the first time I made it all the way through a 24-hour horror film fest with my buddy Nick. I had been to many before, but would always punch the clock after 4 or 5 movies; I could never seem to make it past the 10 hour

mark. But with the power of whiskey and burritos in our bellies, we managed to endure the whole thing. The show got over around noon. Walking out into the daylight, that sun high in the sky, my eyes felt as if they might pop.

Oh, and I still remember one of the first nightmares I ever had. In it, I found myself waking up on our living room couch by myself. The entire room was dark, except for the TV, which was blasting pure static. Panicked and alone, I shot up and ran straight for my parent's bedroom. As I approached their room, their door swung open—as if knowing I was approaching—and I just ran into the pure blackness. In the morning, I asked my parents if they remembered this happening, to which they informed me it didn't. They'd never let me fall asleep by myself on the couch, let alone go to bed and leave me there with the TV on. It jarred me.

The point I'm trying to get at with all this is how important "firsts" are. Firsts are exciting. They're exciting because they can be the beginning of something great and enduring, but you don't even realize it at the time. The wonderful lasting impression a first can leave. You never know what avenues they'll take you down, where they'll lead. Years later—two decades later—you'll find yourself gushing about the first time you saw three people in army fatigues get decapitated in the woods with a machete by a guy wearing a hockey mask (*Friday the 13th VI: Jason Lives*, for those wondering).

To the firsts. Hopefully, it's the just the beginning.

404: IMAGE NOT FOUND
(the system has been smashed.)

Tyler Kasuboski

Now that both Alex Chilton and Chris Bell are no longer living (at least in this universe, if you're a believer in multiverse theory) it is finally possible to compare and contrast the lives and, more importantly, musical legacies of these two *very* different men. In 2000, while working in a wire-harness factory in Redgranite, WI, I received a call from my then girlfriend. She had the day off and was going to take a trip to the Oshkosh Exclusive Company and wondered if there was anything I wanted. I said yes and asked her to pick up the early Ardent CD release featuring Big Star's first two LPs ('72's *#1 Record* and '74's *Radio City*).

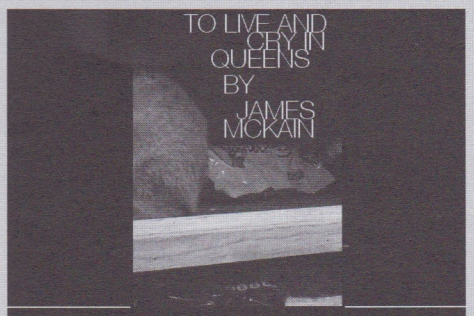
When I got home from work I immediately popped the disc in and had my mind blown thoroughly to smithereens. It was in so many ways a combination of *all* that I loved about real rock music, pop, and soul, synthesized into a totally invigoratingly unique sound. *#1 Record* in particular grabbed at my soul in a way only a few other records ever had. In the years that followed, as I gathered up every bit of Big Star material I could (which even in the early 2000's was limited to the three BS LP's, several live recordings, a few collections of demo/outtake material, and the at the time seemingly strange Rykodisc compilation of Chris Bell's post BS recordings made roughly between '73-'75 called *I Am The Cosmos*). Now as you all probably know Chris Bell only performed on *#1 Record* before parting company with Alex, Andy, and Jody. He traveled to Europe to escape an escalating heroin addiction with the hope of recording some of his own material.

Bell was obviously a troubled being. The record he had put his soul into (BS's *#1 Record*) was receiving near unanimous critical acclaim yet due to the inept distribution of Ardent/Stax Rec. and lack of proper promotion it received little airplay outside of Memphis and was unavailable in far too many record stores across the country. This nearly destroyed Bell. It sent him on a spiral into depression and drug abuse from which his older brother saved him by convincing Bell to travel to Europe with him to lay down some tracks. Near simultaneously, Alex Chilton decided to continue with Big Star (albeit a very different version than that featured on *#1 Record*) and recoded the masterful *Radio City* LP (which did feature three tunes which Bell contributed lyrics to). But the Big Star of '74's *Radio City* (and even more so its follow-up *Third/Sister Lovers* LP from '78) was in reality better described as Alex Chilton's Big Star. In my opinion there is only *one true Big Star* album: '72's *#1 Record* with BOTH Bell and Chilton. Many may heatedly disagree with me, and I in no way wish to diminish nor neglect the roles of drummer Jody Stephens or bassist Andy Hummel. One could argue that they were the true foundation of BS! However it was the songwriting of Bell and Chilton which makes *#1 Record* so timeless.

That said, as the years have passed since my intro to Big Star in 2000 (freakin' 15 years ago already) I have become increasingly convinced that the recordings (many of which were only considered demos) made by Chris Bell (and featured on *I Am The Cosmos*) are *equal* to and in several instances (such as the song "There Was A Light"), are superior to the brilliance of the songs which make up *Radio City*. Chris Bell was killed tragically on December 27th, 1978 in a car accident at the age of 27. Had he had the opportunity to arrange an album (probably titled *I Am The Cosmos*) of his '73-'75 recordings and fine tune it in say 1979 I think it is *very* easy to imagine him finally achieving the success which eluded him in his life.

I feel "There Is A Light" (and many of the other brilliant songs by Bell and included in the posthumous *I Am The Cosmos* release) recorded by Bell while in France in '74 at the famed Chateau D'Heurville studio with Richard Rosebrough on drums, Ken Woodley-bass/organ, and Chris Bell-vocals/guitars is the most beautiful and personally intimate song Chris Bell ever wrote. The spirit of the man who was Chris Bell is on display in its most vulnerable state. I personally feel it is a song which Alex Chilton (whom I love) never quite matched.

So in conclusion, if you are a fan of Big Star and have *not* heard Chris Bell's *I Am The Cosmos* material (as well as Alex Chilton's post-Box Tops/pre-Big Star "1970" Sessions aka "Free Again") it is imperative that you do so! Treat yourself. Chris Bell died unaware of the tidal wave of influence his music created. Alex Chilton (as well as Jody, Andy, Richard Rosebrough, Ken Woodley) at least *did* catch a glimpse of the far-reaching influence of the music which came from the Big Star family. One can only wonder what may have been had Bell not died in '78. Yes, Chilton was exploring different directions by that time both in his own music and in the production of other bands such as his great work with the Cramps. But I believe that Chilton and Bell would've more than likely been drawn back to one another, and in all probability made a masterpiece under the Big Star moniker in the 1980s. We'll never know, but one thing I *do* know is that Chris Bell was a songwriting genius, and one need only listen to "There Was A Light" to experience the emotional power of a man baring his soul and hoping that there is some salvation from this apparently existentially meaningless existence.



I live in Queens. Although I'm merely two miles away from Manhattan, and literal footsteps away from Brooklyn, they both seem miles and years away. That my distance apart from them needs to be described in both space and time is telling. I don't need to explain that Manhattan is the Disneyland of the rich—a broker's fantasy of strip malls and moneyed interest—and Brooklyn the paragon of domestic colonialism; both criticisms are apt, but reductive—true, but ultimately uninteresting now that such worldviews fall under the purview of The Hipster's Handguide to Shirking the Status Quo. Queens, on the other hand, seems to simultaneously belong to a different time and place—divorced from the transfer of money from one virtual hand to another, the cultivation of taste through top-down curation, and far away from being the center of a culture that refuses to account for its own barbarism. The appeal of Queens, at least from the perspective of an outsider, is not what it is, but what it isn't. Queens is the most ethnically diverse borough, and while rent prices continue to increase, the borough has luckily seen a dearth of foreign real estate investors that are fraught throughout north Brooklyn. Queens doesn't reek of garbage quite as badly as the other boroughs.

This contributes to the facade of Queens exhibiting a pastoral, romantic quality—at least in relation to Manhattan and Brooklyn. The idyllic Queens reminds me of a line from Hoelderlin's Homecoming: "It all seems familiar / Even those in a great rush greet each other as / Friends, and every face appears like family". I know my neighbors. We converse. I am on friendly terms with the local shop owners on my street. This is a far cry from the anonymity I experienced living in whitewashed areas of Williamsburg and Bushwick. I generally avoid social interaction with strangers, but maybe we could read something in each other's body language—that we were too exhausted from the working week that living in New York demands—or perhaps the pheromones of white guilt were particularly acrid that day. There's always something rotten in Denmark, though. The distance that separates Queens from the rapidity of Manhattan's commerce and the repetition and reproduction of Brooklyn's culture of cool also separates it from culpability. The transparency of this situation became apparent to me after Daniel Pantaleo was failed to be indicted for the murder of Eric Garner. I was not surprised by the verdict—angry and inundated by melancholy, yes—but I was shocked by the collective reaction of my neighborhood, if not my borough. In the 1979 Paul Schrader film Hardcore, the slimeball P.I. Andy Mast, played to perfection by Peter Boyle, makes the following statement regarding pornography, "Nobody shows it. Nobody sees it. It's like it doesn't even exist." Absent, but most important to the discussion at hand: no one talks about it. So goes the borough's reaction to state sanctioned violence.

Chants of "I can't breathe," and "No justice, no peace," rang throughout the city, downtown Brooklyn, and the South Bronx. Queens was relatively quiet. A certain amount of bread and circus goes along with the substance of protests. There's an element of resistance involved—we make a din about blatant injustice—while at the same time knowing full well that these mass demonstrations are sanctioned by city hall, and policed by, well, you guessed it: the police. There's plenty of literature that has been written on this phenomenon: the co-opting of resistance by the status quo. Liberal democracy plays itself out in the tragic stage play of life by thriving on resistance; bereft of any substantive choice, genuine dissent offers the illusion of an alternative mode of life. I'm not in a position, nor am I interested in arguing against this position, largely because it's true, partly because this issue is beyond the scope of this essay, and mostly because others have written about the subject with greater insight than I could manage. One can look towards the canon of contemporary leftist literature for deflationary accounts of resistance's efficacy—Adorno, Agamben, Hardt & Negri, Foucault, etc. If this is the case—that resistance is, ahead of its good intentions and the terminus of its goal, co-opted—is it worth the effort? Yes. That residents of Queens were not marching in the streets or staging die-ins is not the problem. It's largely presupposed that resistance is primarily the provenance of large scale protests, megaphones, Nisan Farbers. Resistance can also manifest itself as that which simply eludes state powers: sharing wine with a close friend, befriending—and not merely engaging in rote conversation—with your neighbor, discussing a novel with a classmate, love. Resistance can be ho-hum.

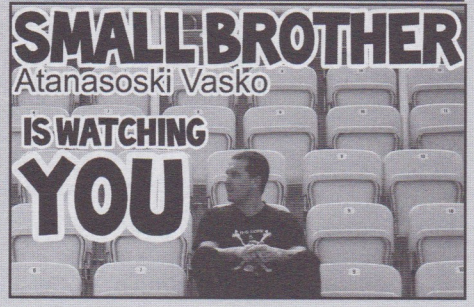
Barring a discussion of authenticity, as a Queensian I've yet to experience a deep sense of resistance—mundane, or otherwise. The most weighty conversation I had with someone regarding Garner was primarily about the protests. Bumming him a smoke, he immediately opened up to me—"I think all of these protesters need jobs." Well, yes. Plenty of us need them, but his implication was the sort of blasé, putative belief that most naysayers espouse about any left-oriented, grassroots political organizing: we're all lazy and incapable of holding steady employment, so we channel what little bursts of kinetic energy we have into acts of primitive circusry—firebreathing, hulahoopery, sword swallowing, egg laying—veiled as concern for the fate of the world. As fucked up as this may sound, reactionary nonsense is somehow infinitely less disappointing than the vast majority of reactions I gleamed from others in my neighborhood. Sedimented conservative beliefs are disgusting, but I understand what motivates them. When the pat response is, "It is a shame," my immediate thought is, "Yes, it is. It's also much more. It's an injustice. It's an act of terrorism. Let's talk about this." It's as if they share my sentiments, tout court, but the insidiousness of an affected friendliness prevents us from communicating beyond cliché. This isn't the mundane sort of resistance of which was mentioned earlier. This is pure banality. I will admit, though—this is an exaggerated, cartoon Queens. How could I possibly speak for an entire borough? I can't and I am painting a picture of a sine qua non by extending these small conversations I have with my neighbors into the, admittedly, much larger world of activism and resistance. Consider fake Queens a heuristic device for explaining the real problem: passivity. If the co-opting of resistance by the status quo is an endemic "follows from" from resistance, then passivity is a sort of contingent enemy. The passive observer may find the resistor's views compelling, even outright agree with them, but passive observers do not find a sense of responsibility in fighting the injustices to which resistors actively partake in dismantling. The passive observer is the one who believes that murder is a shameful act, but is not stricken with a deep sense of loss. The passive observer is Zizek wearing a shirt emblazoned with the Melvillian shibboleth, "I Would Prefer Not To." Passivity is the well-worn comfort of familiarity. There is a fine line between passivity and resistance, one that I am sure most of us cross with some degree of regularity. What, then, is the motivating factor that separates passivity from resistance? I want to suggest that this desire for justice and the act of resistance are engendered by the experience of melancholy.

Contemporary parlance demands a synonymous correspondence between melancholy and depression, but here, I want melancholy to take on that most archaic of registers—the mythic. The object of melancholy is lost—and through dint of one's best wishes and efforts—never resolved by the mourner. In Aeschylus' The Libation Bearers, Orestes loses his father, Agammemnon, at the hands of his mother, Clymenestra, and

then, as an act of retribution, murders Clymenestra. For lack of space, and not for lack of trying (I swear), I'll spare you the gory details of a wild psychoanalytic account of Orestes' consciousness, but, humor me and presuppose that I'm correct: Orestes is beholden to the throes of melancholy. He not only experiences the double loss of his family (sharing its root in latin with familiarity: familaris), but through his own invention, cannot claim justice or reclaim the object of experience lost. We're not only those figures experiencing melancholy—we run the risk of becoming the object of melancholy for others; we occupy the space of an Orestes. Of course, laying the tapestry of myth over the body of modernity doesn't quite fit. Our feet peek out from the bottom. The predicament of contemporary culture works a bit like the following: non-white skinned bodies, the poor, the mentally ill—violently eliminated by a state nominally dedicated to protecting our interests in the name of lawfulness. One's loss, another's mourning—we're all at risk of becoming the subject or object of this phenomenon. The fate of Orestes—the loss of the object of his mourning through which no act of justice—even, and especially, retribution—cannot recover, is a fate to which we can all easily succumb. Melancholy forces us to re-evaluate familiarity precisely because it robs us of familiarity. Melancholy is that very experience of never recovering a lost object of familiarity—for Eric Garner's family, the object of loss was Eric Garner. For me, Garner's death not only re-enforced a sense of justice lost, but also a loss of my community. I can still speak to my upstairs neighbor, Barbara. I can still grab a beer at Ero's Cafe. But there's that unbearable silence that cuts through our speech like a stylus. "It's like it doesn't even exist."

To live and cry in Queens.

Towards the end of Homecoming, Hoelderlin penned, "A sacred language is missing / Hearts beat yet only silence is returned". The life that familiarity lives is a double. With familiarity, we find safety, but also a xenophobic resistance to resistance. When sacred language is replaced with familiar platitudes, speech may as well manifest itself as resolute quietude. What then? We're left like the hyperbolic Queens of this essay: a flatus vocis. Words without air. Now no one can breathe.



Dear readers of No Friends.

Small brother Atanasoski Vasko here. Yeah, coming directly from Macedonia.

Watching and telling stories. So, it's not just Big Brother watching anymore. Let everyone in secret and public governments be aware of that! I am me, they are them, and you are you. I will try to tell today's story from the beginning, from the letter A. Science, religion and punx agrees on one thing. At beginning, it was a chaos. A… Chaos, cosmos, death, life, existence, universe, planet Earth… Living forms. No one can count it. No one can prove it outside planet Earth. Living forms. No one can count them on planet Earth. Humans. Billions of humans. No one can prove it outside planet Earth. Humans. More than seven billion living on Earth. Walking, running, eating, speaking, dreaming, fearing, laughing, crying, eating, drinking, climbing, sleeping… Human lives, billions of lives. Poor, rich, happy, easy, tough, fucked up, artistic, hooligan, left, right, middle, gay, straight, punk, poseur, smart, stupid… nothing special, the best, the worst. Trying to live life worth living. Or just go with the flow. Or both.

Elements of existence, creation and destruction. Known and unknown. Sun and the moon. Light and dark. Good and bad. Truth, lies. Justice, rights, obligations… Reality, imagination. Shape, form. Black coffee, tea, water, fruits, vegetables, flesh, bones, meat…Cities, villages, tents, houses, buildings… Civilized and savages. Nomads and permanent residents. Black, white, red, yellow, brown, blue… Books, web sites, net, paper, digital, analog… Freedom, slavery, you, me, us, them… Flags, symbols, uniforms… Rich, poor, ours, theirs, mine… Weapons, fists, organized… Forced, organic… Continents, states, unions, groups, individuals… Bar codes, control… Freedom.

Brothers, sisters, relatives, friends, sex, love… Big brothers, small brothers, sisterhood, brothers in arms… War, peace… I love it, you hate it. Strong words, weak personality… Massive… I need it, you don't need it. I love it… Love, hate.

This is for me, that is for you. They don't know what they are doing. Everyone speaking at the same time. Billions of human voices. Sounds and frequencies. Powers!

I wanna tell, I wanna hear… Stories. I don't wanna hear it. Stories!

People love stories. Someone loves to listen, someone loves to tell. Stories are like dreams. You can wake up happy or in sweat. You can try to understand or forget it. No matter. Stories and dreams exist because of the humans. Stories, life, humans and death are somehow connected. Let me tell you a story.

There was a place on Earth. A magic place. A mountain called Uterus. People living there believed that the world was created there. They believed that the mountain Uterus gave birth to the world where they live. This is a story everyone which lives there knows. Same like the story about a magic flower that grows every spring at one secret place on Uterus Mountain. The flower which gives eternal life. But, that's another story. This story I want to tell you today is called…

THE FOUND ONE.

Silent night. Sky is transparent clear. Leaves are not shaking. Animals and insects are not moving. That's so strange for Uterus Mountain in early spring. Night turned into day. Quietness turned into voices and sounds. It's alive, it's alive…

Quiet, quiet, quiet. Return the silence, pretend nothing is alive. Death can hear us. If you want this boy alive, stay quiet. Two already died in three years. Someone is doing something not right. Someone is calling death way too early. Or maybe it comes without invitation? Anyway, it was too much speaking and dying for nothing in this place. We must be wise, we must fool the death. The boy is crying loud, tears are running and cleaning, lungs are ready for breathing, stomach is ready for burning. It's so obvious, this boy wants to live. We have just a couple of thousand seconds to try. It's coming with the first darkness. It's coming to take something we don't want to give.

Birds went on the trees, the sun went on the other side, and an uninvited visitor went to the cradle. It expected a boy, but it's a girl. So, it's true. Even death sometimes makes mistakes. Everyone is sleeping. There is no one to answer. Death leaves.

It's a beautiful day again. That's so common for Uterus Mountain in early spring. Everything you need is here. Water, sky, air, sun, soil, brothers, sisters… But, no one is excited, no one speaks more than basic, someone is worried because someone is waiting the night. Little newborn girl is seeing the sun for the first time. Some night visitor wants to be the last.

This night, no one will be sleeping. Death needs answers. It heard a boys cry, but the source looks like a girl. So, it's true. Even the death sometimes makes mistakes. Everyone get back to sleeping. But, can you sleep without dreaming? Can you sleep when fear is everything you feel?

Here comes the sun again. Light is taking care for Uterus Mountain and its children. Everything looks like it is calm, but still someone has the feeling that it was fooled. Someone still needs answers. Someone is something and it's coming with the night. It thinks someone owes something to the dark.

Death looks into the cradle again. It's a girl. That's strange because this family

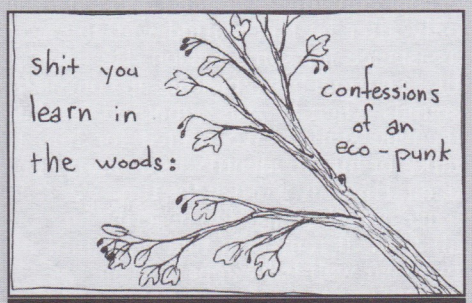
owes a boy to death. Third one. Someone made a grave mistake in the past and this family must pay. It's a punishment.

But, this baby has a beautiful colorful dress, magical earrings and talisman of protection. That's so strange because this family is poor. Death is looking at the parents eyes and sees fear. The baby is naked now, and it turned into boy that will be taken. But, even death makes mistakes. The boy is looking death straight in its eyes. That's not a look of someone that did something wrong. These people in this small house on Uterus Mountain are not the same ones who made terrible things long time ago, but this family must pay. So, death needs answers again. Is this your boy? If it's yours it must die. You must be punished for some things someone from your blood makes long time ago.

No, his name is a Found One because we found him in Uterus Mountain. Someone else is his mother and father, but they didn't want him. We took him because two of our boys already died. It's too much death even for Death. Darkness leaves without anyone being punished. So, it's true. Death realized that it also makes mistakes. The Found One was a reason and explanation. Now, it's not important if it's a boy or girl—family's blood or a found one. Death makes sense if people are not paying for someone else's mistakes.

That's already living, and it's not Death's business.

bpropaganda@freemail.com.mk



Dead animals disappear fast.

I'm not good at knowing what animal a skull came from when I find it. For example, months after finding a skull and it sitting on my shelf, I realized it'd been a cat. Or that probably dog head that's buried in my backyard, decomposing just a little more before I throw it in hydrogen peroxide to clean it up. (Don't use bleach—it weakens the bone.) I thought about leaving the probably dog skull with the rest of its body, but cool shit like skulls you just can't leave in the woods because other people would totally take it.

For example, one day my roommate came back from tripping on acid down by the river, telling me about a raccoon he'd seen, dead and frozen, still hanging onto a fallen willow. It'd freaked him out because he hadn't been sure whether it'd been alive or dead, but after a while of it not moving and him not moving staring at it he figured it was dead—still too scared to make sure of it though.

A day or two later we went down to try to find the raccoon, knowing it'd be too gone and/or frozen for a pelt but still wanting its tail. Sure enough, it was right where he said it'd be, but someone had already cut off its tail. That was the first dead animal related missed connection I wrote. We covered it with logs, wanting to keep it hidden from hikers, carrion, and other potential skull-snatchers hoping nature would take its course and in a couple weeks we'd have some bones to work with. But then the rest of the raccoon disappeared too.

I brought my partner back a squirrel once. Rigor mortis had just set in and it wasn't too swollen. This was December or so, so I didn't have to worry about it rotting. But then she was teaching full-time, and I was teaching full-time so we never got a chance to stuff it. Then there was like a week above freezing where the squirrel was hanging in a plastic grocery bag from the bars over our back window, and after that it was in no condition for making a mantel piece of.

There was this one time we almost got the cops called on us. It was last winter, with the polar vortex, and a lot of ducks were dying because their migratory rhythms were no longer adding up with the seasons. They'd come back up north and whatever they were used to eating wasn't there, or there were nights where the cold got too low for them.

We were up at Punk Rock Beach—which is also the best place to take psychedelics and look at rocks in the city—exploring the ice coves and stalactite caves, hopping from ice flow to ice flow and shifting our balance as one side would sink in the water. All along the shore we were finding dead ducks—like six or seven of them. Some of them were too water-logged, but we took the best ones back to our house where we chopped off their wings, stretched them on sticks, and put them in corn meal to pull out all the moisture. Some people are stoked to get these as gifts.

Not sure what to do with the rest of the ducks, we decided to take them down by the river and set up a sacrificial shrine to freak out all the yuppie mountain bikers that had been tearing up the ecosystem that's been trying to repair itself. It was a damn good shrine, but lasted only a few days before the forest critters had their way with it. A day or two later, a friend linked us to a post on the neighborhood association Facebook page about two twenty-somethings seen walking down our street caring dead birds, how it's illegal to hunt mallards in the city (they weren't), how the person who saw us should call the cops immediately, etc. Whatever.

GRRRLS TO THE FRONT

WITH CECILY DEMENTED

When I was seventeen, I used to blast Hole as I walked down the halls of my innocuous suburban high school. It was the most effective way to drown out the chatter of my fellow classmates, and it sort of made me feel like I was in a movie.

While everyone else was busy worrying about Spanish tests and lunch detentions, I weaved through the crowds focusing only on Courtney singing about big veins and doll hearts. Like every other misanthropic teenage girl who owned a pair of combat boots, I was enamored with the seemingly holy mythos of Courtney Love. She did all the things I only dreamed of, she snarled, she spit she indulged in every pleasure within arm's reach. She was wild, but I could picture her walking down the hall beside me… a knife-tounged cheerleader for one.

It didn't matter that come lunch time I would run off to the Starbucks down the street to secure a corner table for myself and a notebook—I had Courtney. I had Kim Gordon. I had Patti Smith. I had Meredith Graves. No matter how stranded and strange I felt I always had a small chorus of punk rock angels beside me.

My desire to subvert the patriarchy through zines and haphazardly organized house shows didn't just magically insert itself into my consciousness one day. My assimilation into the punk scene was like an extremely slow and painful scavenger hunt. For a while I wasn't even sure if any sort of punk community existed where I grew up in Michigan. Instead, I read other girl's zines online and hoped that maybe someday I would find people who were just as frustrated with every day instances of misogyny as I was. These people appeared in my life with tiny glimmers… first I found a girl selling pins that said "riots not diets" on them at a small yoga festival. Then I found a tiny zine distro a mere 15 minutes from my house.

By the time I made my way to my first actual house show I was eighteen and living in Chicago. To say I was ready would be an understatement—I'd been waiting for this since I was sixteen. I put

on my coziest flannel and stuffed my bag full of zines, tonight was going to be my punk rock coming out party.

It was everything I had dreamed of and more... the top floor of the house was actually a clothes swap. I was an industrious businesswoman and I swapped zines for free food. For the first time in my life, I didn't feel awkward or weird even though I was in a room full of new people. I was home.

Soon my friend and I went downstairs to wait for the first band to start playing. We staked out a worn-out plaid couch in the corner and talked to pass the time. The basement was barely lit save for a string of golden Christmas lights hanging from the rafters. The band introduced themselves and started to play. It was the sort of loud, wailing music that comes with a bassline that burrows inside you and takes up residence next to your red blood cells. It was transcendental.

Soon, a small crowd of lanky guys started moshing. I suppose they wanted to look hardcore but it just reminded me of those wacky inflatable noodle people that used car lots use to lure people into their den 'o' deals or whatever. Eventually, the boys became rowdier, pushing and shoving each other and stepping on the toes of the various audience members. I braced myself against a brick wall next to a drum kit, reasoning with myself that no one would want to fuck with other people's instruments. Soon, the lead singer took notice of the three person slam-dance-athon, and he too became incised. This was his space, it was for his anger. This was his show. Why weren't people looking at him?? He began to push and shove the boys as well, I found myself grateful that there was no way his mic cord could extend all the way over to me…

Then my tailbone had a solo. I was shoved into a drum kit with an embarrassingly loud crash-boom-bang. My friend was slammed into a brick wall, and someone stomped on her toes so hard that it left a boot print of grime.

We both got up, slightly shaken but more irritated than anything. In my head the message was loud and clear, this was a male space for their rage and their concerns. I had read and written so much about the backbone of internalized misogyny within the punk / rock industry, now it had quite literally been shoved in my face. I was pissed.

When I got upstairs, someone who had actually seen my tailbone solo asked if I was okay. He was at least a foot and a half taller than me, and his jacket was covered with spikes but he seemed so genuinely concerned that it practically made up for my fall. It was an example of the compassion and awareness that I had always knew the punk community to be capable of.

Later that night just as I was about to leave, a girl who I had swapped zines with stopped me at the door.

"Hey! I read your zine, I loved it," she gushed.

"Wow, really? Thank you so much." I reached out impulsively and hugged her overcome with joy that an actual person was reading and enjoying my writing. Eventually we got to talking about women in punk and I told her about my subsequent rendezvous with a drum kit.

"Oh fuck that... girls to the front is what I always say."

When taking into consideration what I want this column to be, "girls to the front" always pops up in my mind. Not only was it a phrase coined by riot grrrl leader Kathleen Hanna, but it encapsulates the idea that women in punk should have a central narrative, a space where they can share their stories loud and clear.

People like to think that sexism is something that has been widely eradicated from societal structures, DIY scenes included, but that is not the case. We need to let people know that women in punk are still here. We've got stories to tell and systems to subvert—our work is far from over.

I want this column to be a place to air out our own frustrations about sexism within punk, so if you've ever been pushed, shoved, or told that "girls don't play guitar" now's your time to speak up. Please email me at: raccol@artic.edu to talk about your own experiences within the punk scene.

Sending my love to all the rebel grrls,
Rosie.

I rode my bike home from work that summer afternoon, preoccupied with the notion that my son might have "the big A." That was the text I got from my husband—that the doctor thought we should have him evaluated for "the big A." It was like neither of us could say the word. It was too scary. The implications were too life-changing. We had always known there was something different about him. But this? The seven miles from downtown to Avondale were where I first started mourning the life I had picked out for my son.

Before I go any further, I think it's important to go back and discuss how Baxter made his way into the world. He was born at 8:37am on July 7 2011 at the University of Illinois medical center. He gestated a mere 31 weeks before making his way through the birth canal into the hands of medical residents. He weighed three and a half pounds. His conception was as unplanned as his prematurity, but we were excited. We had just decided not to get a roommate for our two-bedroom apartment, Jimmy had just gotten a promotion at work, and I was just about to graduate with my undergrad degree in Social Work. Actually, I had just finished my last class two weeks before he arrived. We had just barely secured some hallmarks of adulthood when we became parents. We were thrilled to take him home after a one-month stay in the hospital. When discussing his early entry into the world, I always feel it worth mentioning that I started having contractions and went to the hospital on the fourth of July. I take it as Baxter trying to tell us that he was independent and he was going to play by his own rules.

As a social worker, I spent my Masters education studying and memorizing the *DSM-IV-TR*. I wanted to work in psychiatry, so it was important that I was able to identify criteria for every diagnosis in the book. Despite not having a desire to work with mentally ill children, I also had the childhood diseases section covered. I know the criteria for Autism. Despite not having any genetic history of it, I kept those criteria as a mental checklist as Baxter developed. For the first year, he hit all of his milestones on time or early—except crawling, which he decided to do only after he had started walking with assistance for some reason. He babbled like a normal baby, picking up consonant sounds when he was supposed to. And then he stalled. We waited for him to talk, for him to identify us as mama and dada. His only word at the time was "ah-nana" which he used to describe any and all food. It remained that way until his two year well-baby appointment.

But there was a family history of late-talking. My grandfather, the engineer and genius of the family, didn't talk until he was four. Besides, milestone guidelines are just that—they're not the end-all-be-all of human development. The doctor told us to enroll him in speech, but otherwise there were no concerns. He made appropriate eye-contact, he didn't have an aversion to touch—there was no clear ritualistic play. I had been going down the checklist and just didn't see any of the other Autism criteria in him. After a month of speech therapy, he graduated. The speech pathologist told us his speech had been jump-started and would continue to develop on its own and we certainly saw the results. What he could not say with words, he signed. He could sign the alphabet before he could sing it.

So how did we get to the point, less

than a year later, that the doctor was suddenly concerned where he wasn't before? Surely if he had seen signs along with the speech delay, he would have said something. When I finished my bike ride home, I ran up the stairs and looked at him. I looked at his big smile and his excitement over my arrival. I held him as tightly as I could and made a mental promise that, if he did have Autism, it wasn't going to stop him from achieving all that I knew he was capable of.

Now that we've discussed Baxter and a very basic and watered-down explanation of how we got here, I'd like to go over a little bit about Autism. In recent years, Autism has been described as a spectrum. Meaning the diagnosis doesn't exist in absolute forms. There's a lot of grey area and middle ground. Before, there were at least three different possible diagnoses for similar disorders: Autism Disorder, Asperger's Syndrome and Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS). Autism and Asperger's each had (in the *DSM-IV-TR*) specific criteria whereas PDD-NOS was just a catchall for people that had Autism-type symptoms but didn't necessarily meet all the criteria. With the DSM-V, all three of those disorders became officially known as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). ASD is a neurological disorder that affects communication and socialization and not one case is the same as the next. One of my favorite sayings about ASD is "If you've met one person with Autism... you've met one person with Autism."

In the weeks before Baxter's formal evaluation and diagnosis, I *still* wasn't sure that he had ASD. I will save the minutia of the evaluation and diagnostic process for another column, because I think there's a lot of misinformation and unnecessary stress surrounding it. But he was diagnosed in no uncertain terms with Autism Spectrum Disorder. As I mentioned earlier, I had already mourned the loss of the life I had planned out for him. When the psychologist delivered the news, it was time to mobilize. I needed books, I needed movies, I needed an advocacy organization, and I needed positive role models for him. I needed to have a different idea of the life that he could have. It's not that he *didn't* have a future, it was that his path to that future needed to change.

When Ray asked me to write the column, he mentioned wanting to hear from the parent of a special needs child in the context of punk. So how does punk have anything to do with Baxter's diagnosis? Well, to be simple: considering myself a part of this community since I was an adolescent outcast, I have surrounded myself with people who don't give a shit about greater society's perceptions of them. Although Autism is losing its stigma by the day, it's still considered a disability. Many still believe that people with Autism can't speak, can't function on their own—and that is only true for the most absolutely severe cases. However, as Baxter gets older and carries his diagnosis with him, people will still believe that he is incapable, that he is less. And what's more punk than shattering others' expectations of what you are capable of?

Though we recently moved to New Jersey, the community we have built in Chicago—centered on playing in punk bands—is to thank for the attitude we have about Baxter's diagnosis. They have made us feel secure in ourselves in every way. They supported us when we told them I was pregnant by inviting us to shows and letting our band play (On one occasion my band played Lost Cross when I was pregnant and Ray offered me N/A beers, for example). They visited Baxter in the NICU and invited him to barbecues later on. They babysat so we could go to shows and have band practices. When we told them he had Autism, they hugged us tighter. They read my blog and asked me to write a column about it. Nobody turned away or thought less of us or of Baxter as a result.

So while he may not be ready to go to shows just yet—though he did see Boxsledder on his first birthday and Andrew Jackson Jihad at Wicker Park fest—Baxter and, by extension, our little family have been defined by punk. We are community, we are expectation shattering—we are different, not less. To continue the tradition, we promise to educate, support and advocate for others in a similar position. I hope that this column and *No Friends* can be a vehicle for that. If you read this and have questions, suggestions, complaints, or any other type of feedback I'm happy to hear it.

For a further introduction to Autism, I recommend a crash-course on Temple Grandin and reading any books she has written on the topic. I, myself, just finished *Thinking in Pictures* and very much enjoyed it. Ok, see you next time.

If you can't judge a book by its cover, then what about a band by its name? Not even close. Some of my most beloved acts have names that are unremarkable (Tiny Moving Parts) or would be groan-inducing puns if we weren't so used to them (Weezer). For some monikers, we're laughing with the band (Propaghandi). Others? Laughing at them (The Swingin' Utters). It is not easy to pick a name for your band. After a trillion bands every halfway decent band name is pretty much taken. If you like animals, hot water music song titles, movie quotes, get in line, it is all there. Still you want to have a crisp band name, everyone everywhere could keep in mind, after stumbling upon your demo on band camp.

All this said, there's simply no excuse for picking a truly horrid band name, and punk is littered with them. Kim Thayil of Soundgarden lately said in an interview that he got serious doubts that a band with a horrible name could actually manage to write decent songs. I mean, Soundgarden might also not be the greatest band name in history—plus I actually disagree, bands with horrible names have actually written a bunch of great songs, but still I think that band names have devolved into an apocalypse of in-jokes, irony and sexism. It's almost impossible these days not to look at a show flyer without feeling dumber afterwards. Somehow it's gone from fun-ironic to kill-yourself-ironic.

While my dad reminisces about Led Zeppelin or Kool and the Gang, I'm left with tales of acts like Hard Girls and Sister Kisser. I kind of like both bands, but would do so maybe even more, if they actually had better band names and that aftertaste of dull, defeated irony would not be in my mouth, when putting on their records.

I also bet their shirt sales would drastically increase. I mean, I enjoy causing irritated looks in public—Graf Orlock's "save animals, not humans" shirts work amazing for that, but I somehow don't want to be taken for someone who likes shopping for ironic fun-shirts at wal mart.

Again, it's not that irony is bad. In fact, the greatest group name of all time, The Samuel Jackson 5 has a strong funny component to it. Why is it, then, that band names from today—the pinnacle of human irony—suck so hard?

Anyone ever wondered what people, who have not been with you to that basement show in rural Arkansas, and are clueless about the fact, that Big Dick is actually a band that just released some sweet records on Dirt Cult Records, have in mind, when you are waiting in line at Publix wearing a shirt with those guys' band name across your chest? While spotting that shirt in Gainesville, FL in late October might cause death by high-fivin', everywhere else you'll probably get labeled as pitiful douchebag, who is still in spring break-mode although being in his 30s.

Since I am at work right now, I don't dare to google for Big Dick merchandise. It's obviously an SEO nightmare, but, hey, Pup has done alright.

No matter how amazing their music

actually is, I wouldn't dare to put on a Cheap Girls shirt. I have no clue about the background story of the band name, maybe there is a funny one. I just assume that the majority of people have never heard about "my roaring 20s," but would think I am a pervert on a budget.

The awfulness finally became numbing: Sister Kisser. Their t-shirts might increase your popularity at certain farmer's markets, but well… Where to even begin with this one? You'd have to find an awfully deep cave in the middle of an awfully remote planet to find a right-thinking person who might possibly think that's a funny band name. I'm not a prude, but this may be the last thing anyone wants to visualize when listening to music. No?

And yeah, speaking of merchandise—through the years my approach for buying shirts have changed from diehard support of my favorite bands, wearing their shirts no matter how ugly they could be to I'd buy shirts if I love the band *and* the design fits to me—whatever that means. For instance at The Fest in 2013 I wanted to buy heaps of records and shirts. But since I am no big fan of toddlers' paintings of dinosaurs printed on some mustard-colored shirts, it was sheer impossible to find anything decent at all. And that's a whole different story.

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Zach Flannery

I'm learning the difficulty of beginning a column in a zine that is not your own. My name is Zach and I write for a small fanzine called *Your War* based out of Portland, Oregon. In *Your War*, I usually feature a couple of interviews—mainly with young punk or noisecore bands. Also, my fellow writer Phil sources obscure records and flexis that he chooses to discuss in each issue. There have been various contributors over the years, and each writer has carried a heavy interest in the worst records punk has to offer, which is why I was asked to write an article for this fanzine. That's why I'd like to write a column that may stir the thoughts of some punk addicts who happen to find their eyes on this page.

So, what really are some of the worst hardcore releases of all time? The question could be equally satisfying if I was to ask the exact opposite, but pending on who you'd ask maybe the answer is the same. Obviously, there is no apodictic truth to be sought after, but such a question always makes for a good discussion. Usually, I'd make haste to pull a band into conversation that found birth in Kyushu, but here I'd like to find my way to Brazil to discuss a cassette called *Tributo a morte de Sid Vicious* by Anti Timpanos. While I know so little about this band, this cassette is the second of two that released sometime during 1992. While the first demo *Resistencia Noisecore* seems quite rancorous, *Tributo* sounds absolutely disgusting. The sound quality is comparatively worse as well, with the blown out bass fighting to the death against the vocals whilst the drummer maniacally executes a beat that only Xenakis would stand a chance to decipher. At certain points it sounds more like someone violently screaming while plummeting down a hillside than it really does anything else. There are various parts where you can hear little to nothing, but it may only be the result of a warped tape. Who knows? The end of the tape contains more coherent and primitive sounding hardcore tracks. They show a slightly different side to Anti Timpanos for just a mere few minutes before it fades into ambient noise. Aside from describing how the tape sounds, I am unable to relay any further knowledge about Anti Timpanos or reveal any other information regarding either demo tape.

Maybe it's presumptuous of me to say this, but I feel that very few people may have any appreciation for this tape at all. It's easily written off as sounding shit-fi or musically disastrous, and that's completely understandable. But to a select few (myself included), whose ears thrive on frequencies that drive the rest of the world mad, this tape and its sibling may be well worth seeking out. I personally think it's fucking fantastic. Now, while there may be no relevance at all (and as far as I know there is none) to the tape, some major events took place in Brazil during 1992. There was a prison riot in Carandiru, where guards killed over 100 prisoners and raised questions concerning human rights and prison conditions in Brazil during that time. The first ever Earth Summit was also held in Rio de Janeiro that year, which resulted in what we now know to be Kyoto Protocol and the Rio Declaration. When listening to protest music, I always think it's important to be educated on the conditions and the societies that these bands ascended from. I'll discontinue my digression here, but each event is worth researching as well.

Anyway, I figure Anti Timpanos *Tributo* demo stands well as one of the worst sounding hardcore releases of all time. I'm sure some of you already have ideas of your own, if so please write and share them with me. Until then, have a listen and decide for yourself.

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Pure Joy Collective

Chances are that if you're reading this magazine, you have an interest in DIY music. It's also extremely likely that your city does not have a legal, accessible, dedicated, all-ages space for such performances. Anyone who's spent any time attending or playing shows in basements, warehouses, empty storefronts, and the like has an arsenal of stories about performances cut short by cops, angry neighbors and landlords, blown fuses, broken pipes, or couples breaking up and throwing plates at each other (I'm looking at you, Atlanta). It often feels like DIY artists and musicians spend as much time securing performance spaces as creating their art.

And that's just one part of the story. Suppose your city is lucky enough to have a relatively stable all-ages show house or gallery. Is it wheelchair accessible, or do you have to enter a damp basement via a low doorway and rickety stairs? Can the space advertise its address freely without fear of getting shut down? Does it offer a place for teenagers to go after school to learn about music or how to fix their bicycles or just to hang out? Probably not. This last issue is particularly relevant considering the massive cuts to arts and extracurricular activities that have happened in schools across the country. Here in Chicago, we deal with all of these problems and more. This city desperately needs a legal, DIY venue and community space.

Pure Joy aims to be the solution to all of these problems. A group of volunteers is currently working to open a legal, all-ages, non-profit, accessible, 200-cap venue/performance space with additional facilities for community meetings and youth education. The Pure Joy collective formed in late 2013 when board member Ivy Lopez decided to open a venue in Chicago rather than in Baltimore, as she had initially planned. Ivy recruited four other members of the local DIY community to act as board members, and Pure Joy formalized its organizational structure and applied for non-profit status soon after. The five members of the Pure Joy board have each been involved in music and community outreach all of our adult lives. We are fed up with the instability and inaccessibility of the status quo and aim to create a facility that caters to the needs of both the DIY community and the neighborhood in which we locate. We are currently looking at spaces in several

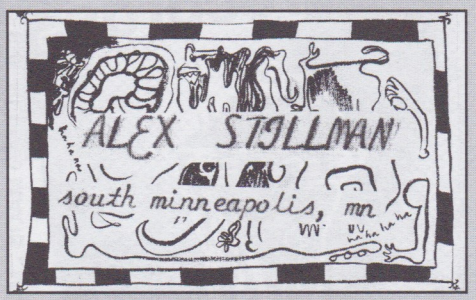
neighborhoods on Chicago's northwest side, including Humboldt Park, Hermosa, and Avondale.

Once open, the programming will be evenly split between shows in the evenings and classes and teen activities in the afternoons. The physical layout of Pure Joy will be designed for flexibility, so that a wide variety of activities can take place in addition to shows and classes. Potential partners include a record shop, café, skate collective, and even *No Friends* zine. We also hope to offer our facilities as a meeting space for other groups in the neighborhood who may not have their own. Pure Joy will be financed by both loans and fundraising efforts, primarily an IndieGoGo campaign run in the spring of 2014 that raised nearly $15,000. We have been overwhelmed by the support, both financial and otherwise, that we've received from our community. Dozens of people have volunteered money, time, and materials to support the cause. However, this process has not been free of challenges.

We initially planned to open in the fall of 2014, but a number of factors have caused delays. First and foremost, the municipal government of Chicago is heavily biased towards business and development. The city's bureaucratic structure does not easily allow a project such as ours to secure the proper licenses, which makes signing a lease inherently risky. We cannot apply for an entertainment license without architectural renderings of the proposed space, but of course most landlords are unwilling to hold a space for us without a lease during the waiting period for license approval. Because of this consideration, we have been extremely cautious in committing to a lease. We've looked at several dozen storefronts and warehouse buildings in our target neighborhoods, but have yet to find the right space. We have several conditions for our ideal space that are non-negotiable—specifically that the space be public transit-accessible, zoned correctly, wheelchair and walker-accessible, and either in a primarily commercial/industrial area or, if in a more residential area, able to be soundproofed for a reasonable cost so that we won't cause trouble to our neighbors. Significant renovations must be done to almost every property we've looked at to make them accessible and code compliant, and so we want to ensure we've chosen the perfect location before committing to renovating. In addition, many landlords are hesitant to lease to a non-profit because they're afraid we'll default on the five-year lease that is standard for commercial properties. Finally, the process of applying to be a federally legal non-profit takes a long time, and our status is still pending. This probably won't be finalized until after we find a space, because we need contracts signed by the volunteer teachers to finalize our application, and these contracts cannot be finalized until we have an opening date set.

This column will appear regularly in *No Friends* to document the process of creating a community space. We still have a long way to go, and at this point in the process we are looking for a few local and motivated volunteers to take on specific responsibilities. There are also things that people outside of Chicago can do to help. Please get in touch at purejoychicago@gmail.com if you'd like to help with planning, fundraising, graphic design, web design, construction, booking a benefit show, or anything else you think would be helpful. We're also interested in hearing from people who are involved in similar projects elsewhere in the country and the world.

We'd love to hear your tips and words of encouragement.



It finally happened. A show that I had booked at my house was featured in an article written for the free weekly rag here in Minneapolis.

It was a Wednesday and I was at work, a pizza shop in the heart of the UMN campus, by the time I caught wind that some local scene favorites, known for making bootleg films of bands on their iPhones, was this week's cover story. The article follows the two videographers as they make their way to several shows made up mostly DIY bands. The last show of the six page spread was hosted by yours truly. The author had never made it to a show at the house before and was clearly awe-struck by the scene. The very detailed description of the basement included that we had done some demo work (illegally) in perpetration for the show. I was completely dumb-founded.

I went to the bar after work. A stack of the paper greeted me at the door. The cover photo was taken by someone I knew. It was of Night Birds guitar player lying on the ground of a now debunked warehouse of the west bank. I grabbed a copy and ran over to my friends.

Sure, there are DIY bands in probably every issue of the free paper and I understand that the author wasn't attempting to write about the DIY community for his own aggrandizement or to promote shows. He was probably doing what every square music journalist does when they discover DIY, document its existence like they have found some edgy new treasure in hopes of creating awareness, pushing their community to participate. I wanted to say, "Oh! Cool! Looks like we are actually making a difference with our dumpy basements, inspiring people to come together, express themselves and relate to each other through art!" But I just can't. Not using the platform of this all exposing weekly published by the thousands.

Three of us sat at the bar and read aloud some of the more frightening quotes from the article. It proved to us that this guy was a bigger donk than we expected. Calling Will of the Frozen Teens' new '90s shoe gaze project, We/Ours, "venerable yet aloof pop punk," and Minot, ND's Mr. Dad "a musical version of a soda fountain suicide," which I am pretty sure is not even describing sound. Even when he describes a show at the very bar we are sitting at, he regales us with details that are clearly just for effect like ordering Minneapolis' hipsters new favorite novelty beer, Stag.

"Do you guys even sell Stag?" asks my friend. "No," replies the bartender.

By the Thursday night I was livid. I emailed the writer asking him to redact all the details about my house. But what about the thousands of copies floating around in every fashionable coffee shop, greasy late-night diner, supermercado and bodega of Minneapolis *and* St. Paul?

Later at my show, I rant on the mic about how my bandmate has to go back to work after our set and run a show for the cities most beloved club—the club that made Prince. I tried to touch on the fact we don't subscribe to the hype-machine circle jerk that is our free paper, indie radio station and the beloved club. The whole point to why I follow the DIY ethos is because I reject the music industry standards for being un-relatable and basically capitalists.

Friday afternoon I was nursing a tiny hangover by getting cheese filed burgers to-go at a famed bar with a friend. As we waited in the crowded, wood-paneled room, we spotted the free paper box. I sighed heavily. When my friend noticed she said, "Why don't you just take that whole stack?"

Back at work that evening, I managed to stop by every establishment on campus that I passed collecting a stack of papers that would lead anyone to believe I worked for the weekly.

Now it's Saturday as I write this, and I realize by tomorrow the new issue of the free paper will be out and most of the copies that invaded my privacy will have disappeared but there's still this growing anxiety inside me. Are there people that I collaborate with in my community every day that don't feel like there was any problem with sharing our experience on such a conventional platform? Why do they think that is ok? Are the cops gonna show up? I'm going to continue having conversations with my peers about it, but I can't help but become more wary of the strangers I let in.

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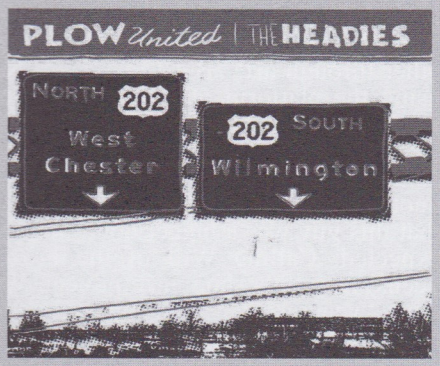

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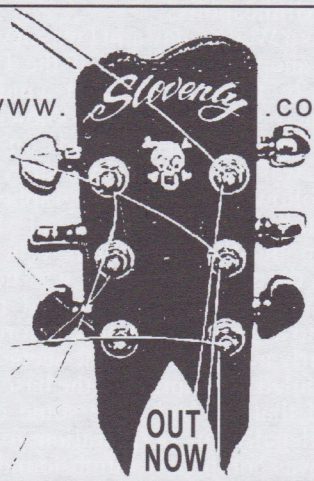

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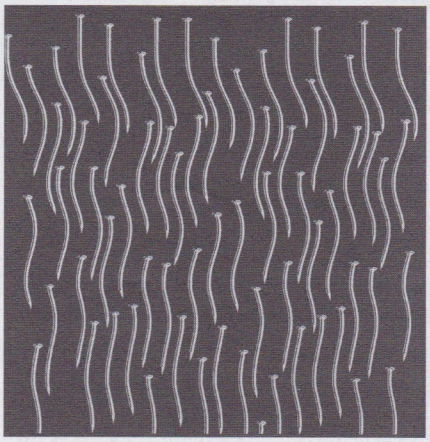

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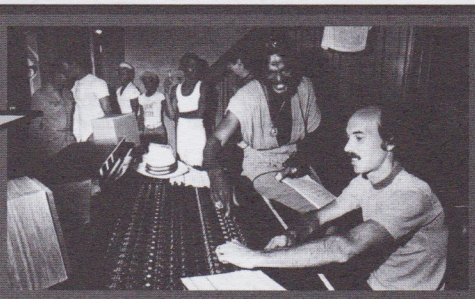

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music reviews

THE #1'S "The Number Ones" LP

I was really hoping the name of this band would be pronounced differently, but I see in some descriptions they go by the #1'S. The comparisons are immediate and unavoidable, and that's not necessarily a bad thing—there's EXPLODING HEARTS and UNDERTONES all over the place here. Every song on this is catchy as hell. Particularly, I think the abundance of minor chords is nice. It's power-pop with a slowly churning uneasiness that builds throughout. It's a really strong record, but there's something missing here... I think the chorus of the last song is a great example of what I'm talking about: "If you go home with him tonight, I want to die. I thought you were my girlfriend. Please tell me why." I'm not necessarily looking to have my mind blown by pop music or walk away in tears, but holy shit, gimme something a little more evolved than calling dibs on another human! Great first LP. Can't wait to hear more. (Jim) (Deranged)

50 MILLION "The Song Remains the Same" CS

This is their last recording done in 1999. Interestingly, it's definitely more akin to the early stuff. There's a lot of audio effects, short almost half-songs, noise, samples, and other insanity. More of the "Whiskey Eyes" side of the *ur2punk4me* record. It's all great, in its own way, but honestly I am way more in love with the over-fuzzed pop gem "Sleepover" side of that record. I was, maybe unfairly, hoping for a whole record of that. There are definitely elements of that here, but not enough dammit! It's a long record and there aren't any breakout hits, but this is another rad record by an amazing band that notoriously transcended genres well. I dare say it—if you are young and you love TENEMENT, and you've never heard of 50 MILLION, you have to check them out. They operate in similar musical head-spaces somehow. Start with *Bust the Action*. (Jim) (Starcleaner)

ALRIGHT "Mixed Signals" EP

I love, love, love, female vocals, and find it super-duper refreshing to hear new altos and sopranos booming through my headphones. ALRIGHT are straight-up pop punk from North Carolina with simple, repetitive, hooks and emotionally driven lyrics. Not too sweet and not too salty, contrasting female and male vocals and harmonies that work very well together. (Danny B.) (Negative Fun/Self Aware)

AMERICAN EAGLE CD

I was so excited to review this CD. I've only ever heard of AMERICAN EAGLE through friends discussing mid '80s NYHC bands. There was always talk about this band being an overlooked Oi! band from that era. Nope. There is nothing Oi! about this band. This is bland and simple NYHC with too many Oi! chants thrown around. I don't know what the deal is with American skinhead bands that play unoriginal HC, sprinkle some "oi!" chants in there and think they are playing Oi! music. What's next, start a synth band and yell "oi!" over the tracks and call that an Oi! band? Doesn't work that way, but I shouldn't be that harsh. There are some decent tracks on here too. "United Forever" is a pretty solid HC song that holds up very well and was probably as tough and as cool as any of their peer's songs. If you are looking for an Oi! band you won't find that here. This is a nice little time capsule of a great period in USHC, skinheads playing hardcore, nothing more, and nothing less. (Benny) (United Riot)

ARCTIC FLOWERS "Weaver" LP

Haunting punk for the end times, melding the best of anarcho/peace punk and post punk influences. ARCTIC FLOWERS' sound has evolved from earlier releases—the lyrics are often sung rather than shouted, and the songs are more melodic. Hooky yet dark, this shift is especially alluring on the dancier tracks. Pounding drums back up driving guitars, and powerful lyrics get stuck in my head. Even if there is no future, turn it up, turn it up! Don't sleep on this one... (gaybobz) (Deranged)

ASCEND DEAD "The Advent" CS

The Advent is old school death metal in presentation, however (and it pains me to admit it) there winds up being something "stock" in what I've come to think of as meat and potatoes death metal. Although I love a *Serpents of the Light* tribute band as much as the next fella, on ASCEND DEAD's most recent cassette, *The Advent*, the whole affair seems markedly more vital. There is a distinct pacing ASCEND DEAD are executing each track with that's just so breakneck, so utterly rabid, it genuinely sounds like they're out to harm themselves and everyone around them. The songs on The Advent are just so goddamned urgent and leaning forward the whole time: it's as if the guitars are always trying to catch up with the rest of the song, and everyone is playing for dear life. Even the production steers clear of the trappings of typical death metal. Truth be told, the sound on this reminds me of CREATION IS CRUCIFIXION just as much as any ancient Scandinavian beastmetal band I can think of. The howling, raise-the-dead vocals that hover on top of the expert soloing and grit-teeth blasts suit this music perfectly. Savage, vicious music for people with bad intentions. Get on ASCEND DEAD's level. (Ted Sweeney) (Blood Harvest)

ASID BATERI "Demo" CS

Apparently this band features members of LOMA PRIETA. Honestly, the most interesting thing was the mid-paced intro at the beginning of the tape... the riffs were outta this world for that minute of instrumental rockin'. The rest after that was just fast crusty

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sounding hardcore punk with buried vocals, but that's still fine with me. To me the A-side of this tape sounds like a Japanese HC band with a dude from DOWN IN FLAMES on vocals. Track two gets weird towards the end, there's a breakdown that gets a little blown out and artsy. Side-B sounds a little more early 2000s/CARRY ON inspired. Call me crazy but the riff in track three sounds like something off of AMERICAN NIGHTMARE's "Background Music." All in all, this is a good demo with good riffs and mostly fast punk influences. It's just echo-y enough to break out into Youth Attack territory and that's cool I guess. Looking forward to hearing a 7". (John) (Dead Tank)

AUSZENSEITER / MARAIS split 12"

Screamo might be the worst term to use to describe bands, or maybe skramz is. Either way, these two German bands have used screamo to describe themselves, so I don't feel bad bringing that term up. This nine song split 12" is pretty uneventful screamo that doesn't veer too far off the beaten path. I do like how MARAIS uses a less heavy sounding guitar tone. It actually sounds a lot like SHARP KNIFE's guitar tone, which is weird for this type of music. AUSZENSEITER songs have more of a heavy, dissonant feel to them, which you would expect from this style. I wish screamo bands would ditch the quiet, emotional parts and just play fast hardcore. (Nicolai) (I.Corrupt)

BABY GHOSTS "Maybe Ghosts" LP

This record by SLC punkers BABY GHOSTS—which came out a year ago, so this review is not exactly timely—follows the trend of twee pop-punk with the sort of earnest confidence you might expect from the genre. Think LEMURIA meets JABBER—upbeat, heartfelt, and cute, but with some solidly ripping guitar solos and pretty excellent harmonies. Personally, the cutsie-indie-pop-punk genre doesn't quite strike the chord with me that it does with a lot of folks I know, but this band definitely does the genre justice. (Sami Fink) (Dirt Cult, Drunken Sailor, Hip Kid, Lost Cat, and Waterslide)

BALLROOM "Ballroom" LP

Ballroom plays noise-y rock just rough enough to be considered punk rock. Ridden with feed back and an overall feeling of chaos, this release is consistent with its dirty, ripping sound, and doesn't let up for a minute. Solid first release that borders on no-wave while still maintaining hooky riffs. (Chago) (Ever/Never)

BAMA LAMAS "Going Up?" LP

With the huge resurgence of "garage rock" and the longhair weirdy-beardies singing about pizza and hamburgers in torn blue jeans and printed band tees you kind of forget how that music was supposed to be played. The BAMA LAMAS take you back to the frat rock without any tongues in cheeks. Sharp dressed fellas playing straight up rock'n'roll—raunchy sax and all. The production on this is clean and crisp, but the music being played is just as budget rock as any MUMMIES records ever was. Music for meeting that someone out on the dance floor, instead of leaning against the bar. Might be one of my new favorite live bands in Chicago. (Ray) (thebamalamas.bandcamp.com)

BARBATOS "Straight Metal War"

With the release of the *Straight Metal War* Nuclear War Now! productions have released the single most fun metal release I've heard in years! BARBATOS are a power thrash and project of Yasuyuki Suzuki, from D-Beat Street Rock N Rollers, TIGER JUNKIES, and The Most Evil Band in Japan, ABIGAIL. For those familiar with his work, you already know what to expect: loud, balls out, molotov party thrash. With *Straight Metal War*, BARBATOS have revealed themselves to be the missing link between GISM and JUDAS PRIEST via endless blockades of leather-clad crossover not no different from DISHAMMER—but all in all more classic in its heavy metal approach with falsettos and twin harmonies in its big japan thrash attack. My recommendation is to pop some aspirin and start drinking water, because you're going to have a bangover tomorrow. (Ted Sweeney) (Hells Headbangers)

BELLE GHOUL "Rabbit's Moon and Doomsday" 10"

BELLE GHOUL have definitely nailed their dance-indie-pop sound. There's some deeply layered percussion and instrumentation—horns, synths, and various effects create a veritable wall of sound. These well-crafted pop songs contain great dynamic range and beautiful melody. This is totally a solid record, but I'm having trouble with it. Nothing particularly stands out because it is all so perfectly in place. It sounds like wildly talented folks clocking in. (Jim) (Elefant)

BLANK PAGES "No Reception" EP

Catchy, twangy dark and melodic punk. It's pretty unrelenting all the way through these two songs—just under five minutes for the whole thing. Definitely a huge Wipers influence here, but more upbeat and with a more traditional structure. Less droning and more angular. Their description says they are from Berlin, they have an LP out, and that they are breaking up... that's a huge bummer because this is probably the best thing I've heard this round. I'm definitely gonna get a copy of this, and check out the LP. I'd like to see what the members end up doing next. (Jim) (Hardware)

BLASTMAT "Broke Life Working Class" CD

Wow, let me be the first to say that I totally misjudged this one! The cover features artwork that looks like it was pieced together from the cheap-o flash wall at the tattoo shop, and it blatantly reads "Connecticut Hardcore" front and center. I put this sucker in expecting to hate on some chugga chugga jock shit, only to be greeted with a classic exchange from the movie *Falling Down*. Whatta ya know, that's the name of the opening track. Just as I started to think about how that's the kind of anger I can really relate with, I noticed that my foot was involuntarily stomping. And it was going fast. It looks like it's gonna sound like a '90s hardcore album (sucky) but sounds more like a early '80s rust belt hardcore album (it rips!) If this album had a look, it'd be camo-cargo shorts and a basketball jersey. If you're actually from Jersey, you also have a chain. (Nick Rouley) (Sloppy Pile)

BLEACH EVERYTHING / VORS split EP

One song each from each band on this Magic Bullet release. BLEACH EVERYTHING's "The Moaner" is mid-tempo hardcore with a lean more towards the metal side of things, with quick, interesting forays into mathy metal at a couple of points in the song. Vocals are typically evil-screamy, but not altogether uninteresting for this kind of music. As for the lyrics, I dunno, maybe they're *trying* to be silly: "A cat on your bed/A closet you're led/ The Moaner awaits/ He'll bludgeon your face!" The VORS track is slow, meandering darkwave synth goth (I guess?), which creates an interesting overall dichotomy for this record as a whole. Breathy, intentionally scary vocal delivery, with some truly evil sounding repetitions of "You Fail" at the end of the song. (JPool) (Magic Bullet Records)

BONUS BEAST "Bonus Beast" CS

It's a bit of a battlefield on mars. Undulating seismic rhythms with clipped shards that don't quite hold a beat but breaks it—certainly carrying one's attention as the sounds weave a muted but colorful blanket of playful patterns. Warm and comforting noises draw you into the mindful chaos of this apocalyptic space-age theme-park arcade ride as the last few fights fizzle out and chemical dust settles. Picking up a whirlwind of sounds, this tape (d)evolves into pleasant chirping memories. Dark, light and large cast shadows fall around this very psychedelic solo noise act—smoke some weed and star at your ceiling. (Josh Vidal) (Oakland, CA)

BOOTS "Demo"

Boots *is* cute. Super catchy, bubblegummy, lo-fi poppy punk. Not pop punk, not garage—punk. At first I didn't really think the keyboard was necessary, but the more I listen to this the more I can't imagine this band without it. It reminds me of the shambling twee of PARK AVE, but you know, 100% punk. "Wobbley" also has the best use of the mid-song sample since Jawbreaker. And any band that has a song that is both about eating sandwiches and how rich people suck ("Slammin Sammys") is gonna win me over immediately. Fucking great release here. I missed them once at a Weenie Hut Jr's show and I won't make that stupid mistake again. (Ray) (bootsiscute@bandcamp.com)

BROKEN TALENT "Rules No One" LP

Mid '80s punk, Florida had something going somewhat like Texas did at the same time. Has a REALLY RED, PARTY OWLS, FLIPPER, GERMS feel. This is an archival record of a band you may have never had the chance to hear. (Francisco Ramirez) (Florida's Dying)

BROTHER/GHOST "Buried" LP

Nearly six years since their debut EP, Austin band BROTHER/GHOST finally release a proper full length in *Buried,* which seems to have undeniably been well worth the wait. The merits of this are obvious even upon first listen. Nothing feels incidental or careless. Every word, every note, every cymbal crash has been meticulously built into hauntingly beautiful and crushingly heavy atmospherics. As a whole, *Buried* is the kind of late night mythology told around campfires to scare the shit out of you, the dark tales of small southern towns that never seem to crawl out from under their own tragedies. Patiently and carefully crafted, this album sets a mood and doesn't let up. (Chris Barnes) (I. Corrupt)

THE BUG "What's Bugging You?" CS

I first heard about this band because one of the members contacted me about helping them set up a show in Carbondale, IL. I asked my partner about them and they told me that they were really good and described them as "accidentally screamo." Since she's as old as I am I figured she meant it more of the PALATKA/SAETIA/PG.99 kind of way. I kind of wish she didn't tell me that, cause it's hard to not look for something once you're told it might be there. But also, she's kinda right. This is some fast, spastic, hardcore punk with wild-ass vocals. Definitely feels like it's all about to fall apart at any second, but then a sharp and sudden turn (like the guitars in "Going Back to Bed") will happen and you realize that this band knows *exactly* what it's doing. This reminds me of how when the whole "screamo" thing was just getting off the ground and getting (inter)national traction that the bands involved refused the label, only calling themselves punk bands. I'd bet that the BUG would consider themselves the same. Punk by any other name still fucking rules—as does this release. Recorded by Amos from TENEMENT and mastered by Will from ORCHID/ AMPERE for those of you keeping score. (Ray) (Not Normal Tapes)

BUMMERS EVE "Fly on the Wall" EP

When I first started listening to this, I thought to myself, "Man, I can see this band playing with Cincinnati's VACATION." Then I realized they are also from Cincinnati! "Blue" is a fast paced song that has catchy guitar riffs and fuzzed out vocals. Mike's vocals blend in with the reverb and blends perfectly. "Fly on the wall" starts off with a dream like tone reminiscent of SANTO AND JOHNNY's "Dreamwalk" that leads you to a fuzz toned song that stays catchy and haunting at the same time. It's so damn catchy that you'll find yourself singing along and wanting to be a fly on the wall. (Denis) (Almost Ready)

BURNT HAIR / COLD WASTE "Burnt Waste" CS

There must be some kind of X factor that COLD WASTE and BURNT HAIR both have because despite sounding very different they fit incredibly well on the same tape. The COLD WASTE side sounds a bit like a solo bedroom goth project, with programmed drums, a fairly minimal (but danceable) bass sound, and guitar that has a ton of flange added. In fact the songs are actually performed by a duo, with each adding a distinct vocal flavor at different points. BURNT HAIR sound a lot less traditionally produced than their split-mates, with a bit more venturing into noise. Thanks to both the melody and a ridiculous amount of echo, the vocals bear a strong resemblance to a group of monks singing in a very large empty room. As far as instrumentals go, they keep it pretty simple with a similar echo on the drum machine and ambient synth sounds. This would be a fun tape to show to your least alternative family members so you could ask which side they find weirder. (Clement Wink) (Dead Tank / Popnihil)

BUSTED OUTLOOK "Plague Horder" demo

Usually I can't stand when bands that have intro songs, especially if it's called "Intro" –double especially if they're a hardcore band. It's just so... lazy. That BUSTED OUTLOOK managed to keep my interest when doing that speaks to how amazing this Bay Area hardcore outfit is. Tight riffs with some '90s and Crew throwback moments. Extra props for subtitling a song "Robert Collins' Knee Brace." Four raging cuts of hardcore and one genuinely exciting intro instrumental with an added bonus of a perfect guitar dive in the last song. Recommended. (Ray) (bustout.bandcamp.com)

CANADIAN RIFLE "Sexually Fucked" Single

Chicago's CANADIAN RIFLE are simply one of the best bands out there. Don't listen to this 40 year old. Listen to the band. They are noisy, with some garage accents and catchy vocals. A bit of CRINGER is also in there as well. Great two song 7." (Francisco Ramirez) (Dirt Cult)

CAULFIELD CULT "Half Empty" Download

When did '90s Midwest emo reach Singapore?! These hit all the marks in the style—twinkly guitars, gruff heartfelt vocals, an almost embarrassing amount of honesty in vocals. Sometimes it ventures into the post-JAWBREAKER pop-punk/emo sound that would find itself mid-bill at The Fest and other times into some '90s alterna/indie revival. I know these styles have made a huge comeback in the states over the past five years or so, but it's cool to see that it's reached thousands of miles away—and that the folks there are doing a lot better at it than a lot of the people from where it started. (Ray) (thcaulfieldcult. bandcamp.com)

CAVALCADES "Lights Begin To Dance" LP

Where this band shines lies between the interplay of the intensely yearning, passionate vocals screamed or sang harshly over beautiful guitar work. It's in this juxtaposition that CAVALCADES doesn't quite fall into the "just another emo/hardcore band" category. Where there is anger, there is also melody and intricate instrumentation. Nowhere is this more illustrated than in the frustration and breakdowns in songs like "Burning Matchsticks" and "Projectionist." While it doesn't exactly redefine the genre, this is a solid listen from start to finish, falling somewhere between the sound of bands like SMALL BROWN BIKE and TOUCHE AMORE. In the Aberdeen band's four years they have developed their sound a great deal, and while there is room to expand and grow, they are definitely on to something impressive that sets them apart from other bands in the genres they combine. (Chris Barnes) (I.Corrupt)

CAVE STATE "Phase One" EP

Classic sounding powerviolence. Miss CROSSED OUT, NO COMMENT, SPAZZ? Well you could find *much* worse than CAVE STATE to get your fix. Some people rag on bands for rehashing genre conventions, but this shit is just as legit in 2014 (if not more, actually) than, say, Infest. Tough, angry. I found out they had played Oakland the day after their show and I was almost as pissed as this record—if that's even possible. The bass tone alone on this thing is worth the price of admission. The artwork is some fucking dark and disturbing stuff, I kept putting it down and then picking it up and asking over and over, "what the hell am I looking at exactly?!" Eleven songs, with the longest clocking in at 1:01. This shit makes me want to throw molotov cocktails at Google buses. Up the brown powerviolence punx! (Ray) (To Live a Lie)

CHAOS ECHOES "Transient" LP/CD

Transient had so much potential. I really wanted to like this album, I really did, but it just kept leading me on, and simply didn't come through when I needed it to. The entirety of this album teeters on a big wailing metal crescendo, but doesn't tip for almost forty minutes in. It's like foreplay—it can be very exciting, but if you just keep things at a tease for too long of a time you start to realize that what's happening isn't erotic—what's happening is "just some handstuff," and that's what we have here; handstuff metal. I'm sorry, but I simply can't keep my enthusiasm for some wild blasting up for that long without a new BLASPHEMY record at the other side of the build. And that is what's happened here, by the time the foreplay has passed, and *Transient* is ready to get it on, I'm already wondering if there's any beer left in the fridge. (Ted Sweeney) (Nuclear War Now! Productions)

CHERRY DEATH "Brain Into Blue Skies" Download

This might be a little to psyched out for my personal taste these days, but still , it's a strong release. Noodly, wailing guitars over dreamy chord changes. There's a definite punks-taking-acid, Flaming Lips vibe to them. They very much remind me of a more laid back version of Oakland's YOGURT BRAIN mixed with some BRIAN JONESTOWN MASSACRE and MY DAD IS DEAD lo-fi chill. If I could still take mushrooms and wander around the woods all day without freaking the fuck out, I'd bring this perfect soundtrack. (Ray) (cherrydeath.bandcamp.com)

CITY MOUSE / WEEKEND DADS split 7"

The WEEKEND DADS side of this split has a very 2000s Midwest pop punk kind of vibe to it. Songs about being depressed and putting it back together and whatnot. It's been done before but if it's your cup of tea you might dig it. The CITY MOUSE side is very simple 4/4 pop punk but with a vocalist that is talented, but does not fit with the style in my opinion. Could probably do well on the current Warped Tour raquet. (Scott) (It's Alive)

CLOUD RAT "Qliphoth" CS

CLOUD RAT is fucking fast and fucking pissed. This particular release by them does not stray from that path, but what fast hardcore band would be complete without slow crushing parts too? CLOUD RAT brings those and adds plenty of metallic melody to them. The guitar tones are heavy like a '90s Jnco band but the majority of the drum beats that accompany them are fast and grindy. You can tell these four antisocial warriors are bringing multiple influences to the table besides just INFEST and SIEGE. I think anybody who has gotten emotional to HIS HERO IS GONE will have no problem doing the same to this. Madison's vocals/lyrics are brutal, inspiring and powerful, with every ounce of personal wit mixed with thought-provoking social commentary. I also really love the raw but perfectly audible recording...an absolute must for a band like this. Listen to this tape and then go start a circle pit next time you get to see CLOUD RAT play a house show. That's all. (John) (Dead Tank)

COLISEUM "Anxiety's Kiss" LP

Gone are the days of Southern rock'n'rollin' stadium crust. Welcome to the new COLISEUM. The COLISEUM that embraces synth lines, goth-rock imagery, and song titles like "Sharp Fangs, Pale Flesh." With more than a slight similarity to the CULT, this new (I dare say, much improved) Coliseum manages to retain the heaviness and punch of their earlier years but with some soaring guitar riffs and much more intricate and nuanced songwriting. The beards and black are still here, but its more mesh and lace than denim and leather. This is one of the most solid, and original sounding, rock records records I've heard in a long time. If you're into both post-punk and heavy rock, this is a great middle ground. (Ray) (Deathwish Inc.)

COLD WASTE "Primitive" CS

Uptempo darkwave / post-punk with a little more edge than most records of this genre. The drum machine holds everything together well but doesn't dominate. I'm hearing a lot of the WIPERS in here. This isn't anything especially groundbreaking, but it's pretty damn good. (Kevin Garvey) (Dead Tank)

COLOSTOMY BAGUETTE? / HADES MINING CO. split 3"

Do I really have to review a [what I presume to be] a noisecore split 3"? I mean, fuck, I like the idea of this novelty on paper but now the thought of having to line up my turn table arm for the *two* tracks of what I have basically already heard in the prior reviews above is, well, irritating...so I guess they win? Alright, one track from each band, one of which from a band bearing one of the worst names ever (I bet you can guess which one I am referring to). Seemed like a bad joke they made into a real band solely for the purpose of filling out the other side of this split...but seriously though, I wanted to hear it. The shitty band name really piqued my curiosity, but I couldn't even play the record, not because of the weird format but oddly enough because the center hole was too small, and I couldn't even put it on my turntable properly. What a curve ball, oh well. (R. Komen) (Continuum)

COMMON IGNORANCE "Up In Smoke" Download

Fast paced hardcore. Great fuzzed out guitar tone. The vocalist sounds like if she wasn't screaming at the world she'd be puking all over it instead. Somewhere between WEIRD TV, CONDENADA, and pure disgust (not the band, the sentiment). The songs "Common Ignorance" and "F.C.S." are thrashed masterpieces. I know Houston's pretty far, but it might be worth figuring out a trip to see this frenzy in the flesh. (Ray) (commonignorancetx.bandcamp.com)

CONDITIONS "Fight Nothingness" CS

Nightmarish dream pop with synthetic lopsided dance grooves induced by brain experiments, actually. This tape makes me feel normal in an inviting fucked up way that expresses isolation, desolation, and medical treatment of the human-self-rat species. Too catchy to believe my ears with its crushed and crunchy lows set up against crispy high and tight melodies that spin upon the surreal carousel of societal "normalcies" which this tape rejects and accepts for the shadowy monster it is. Yacob's interplay of falsettos and deep serenading hymns show a vocal range that lends itself to flipping the tape over and over in perfect curiosity. This tape also holds a nice take on the TAMMY's "I get the msg" (retitled/replayed into a new context which keeps it fresh with its new twist of modern reality). I've listened to this tape far too many times to admit and even believe this could be the Oakland tape of 2014 despite all the stuff going on—it really embodies the year's dream/reality in the most surreal and natural way that it's uncanny. Pick this up if you're into no-wave and electronic music or are just plain adventurous--this tape will be a classic. (Josh Vidal) (Albacore)

COOPER "UHF" 12"

I prefer my music dark and moody, but I couldn't help but smiling and tapping my feet while listening to this release by Spanish power pop rockers COOPER. The guitars are absolutely sparkling with clean tones and catchy hooks, while the vocals and melodies soar smoothly over the instrumentation. Really lovely and easy to listen to pop—certain tracks, "Entre Girasoles" in particular—have an irresistibly catchy '60s pop feel. I'm not familiar enough with power pop (or the Spanish music scene) to draw any super relevant comparisons, but if you like clear voices, beautiful harmonies, clean guitar tones, and feel-good music, then absolutely check this record out. I'll definitely put away my bad attitude for a few minutes to give this record another spin. (Sami Fink) (Elefant)

COORDINATED SUICIDES "Life is Beautiful" CS

Noise rock from Madison, WI. This is a genre that is coming back in full force these days. Perhaps it's a revival or just because it's fucking good. Angular, angry music is coming back. COORDINATED SUICIDES does a great job of bringing back the sounds of early Am Rep. Something is happening in Madison for sure. (Francisco Ramirez) (Kitchy Manitou)

COTILLION "Intro / Crossed and Coiled" CS

This shit sounds like it could have been on Ebullition back in the day. Heavy hitting hardcore parts with interesting drum beats, mixed with light emotional guitar parts accompanied with gruffly yelled and clean vocals. The opening of the second side of this tape hits like a sack of bricks. Also, these guys are from Chicago so hopefully I'll get to see 'em tear up a basement sometime soon! Highly recommended! (Scott) (Self-released)

CRONE "Crone" Download

Drowsy, sludgy doom crust. Three tracks, the second one being 22:27 in length. Heavy riffs, sick female vocals, creepy as fuck keys/piano. The word "epic" gets thrown around a lot when talking about this style of music, but hey, when it fits, it fits. Epic. (Ray) (croneminneapolis.bandcamp.com)

CRUSADES "Parables" EP

CRUSADES is punk with and an overall darker tone. In comparison to many bands of this style, this 7" release is an eclectic entry in the genre. Their blend of speed, melody and gothic overtones is certainly unique, though they are most likely for fans of the pop-punk genre. (Chago) (It's Alive!)

DAISY WORLD "Us, Weakly" CS

Driving, repetitive post-punk. Shared male and female vocals. Exclusively mid-tempo. Dark guitar leads and bass heavy throughout—the vocals shout-drone and hold it together beautifully. It feels apocalyptic in an emotionally distant way, as if they've accepted this realm even though they had no part in its creation. Like a bleak hellish landscape. And somehow the minimalist vocals lighten the darkness. The last track is a cover of the BEACH BOYS, "Til I Die," and I'd be lying if I said I wasn't wondering the entire tape how that would play out. Let me say, they stick fast to their own sound perfectly. They make it theirs. It is haunting and dirty and it hurts. The song is already crushing, but the story is different because the sugary harmonies are missing here. (Jim) (self-released)

DEATH TO TYRANTS "Untitled" EP

Instrumental math rock is an interesting genre to tackle. For starters, if you're going to play math rock do the world a favor and don't have a vocalist. Worst lyricists ever. I'm looking at you MINUS THE BEAR! Secondly, no one really gets turned on by the genre unless you happen to see a band perform live. I got super into the CANCER CONSPIRACY after seeing them at the Fireside Bowl, as did all those who were in attendance that warm summer evening. All nine of us were stoked! Lastly, the genre is hardly a hop, skip and a jump from being a full on jam band. If you're into this one get used to the fact that at some point soon you're gonna be selected for Jerry Duty and it's your goddamn right as a newly found dead head to help solve the case of who stole your face off. I suggest starting with the Pigpen years. (Nick Rouley) (Sloppy Pile)

DEATHWANK / HADES MINING CO. split 7"

More nonsensical noisecore by HADES MINING CO., it is what it is. True nerds will dig it; I half dig it and half hate it. Again, it is what it is. DEATHWANK is suuuuuuper lo-fi grinding noisecore, or maybe just sloppy grind with actual structure? Pretty shitty sounding overall, but then again that seems to be the point on these records so they have succeeded. I like it for what it is. (R. Komen) (Continuum)

DECADES FAILURES "G00DBY3" LP

I guess this little gem is limited to 300 copies. I am much honored to have a copy. This band does a great job of mixing post punk with goth. It's like a darker version of A PLACE TO BURY STRANGERS with FIELDS OF NEPHILIM, or SISTER's vocals. Normally I would think that something like that wouldn't work or be, perhaps, to obvious and simple, but it works. A song like "Blank Clocks" has a very nervous vocal delivery that works so well. The clean guitar along with drum machines, keyboards and dark reverb soaked vocals works so well and adds a nice haunted charm to them. Listen to "Fractured" on a sunny day and tell me if it won't depress the shit out of you and ruin your day. I love that. I love when songs can take me on a trip. These are songs to dance and slit your wrist to. Solid. Dark. I'm in love. (Dead Tank)

DEIPHAGO "Into The Eye Of Satan" CD/LP/CS

DEIPHAGO are a belligerent Phillipino war machine. Three years ago I remember attending a black and death metal festival with the intent on seeing NYOGTHAEBLISZ, who, at the time, I was convinced were the most violent band on the face of the Earth. Also performing that night were DEIPHAGO. After that night there was no question in my mind: although NYOGTHAEBLISZ were just amazing—DEIPHAGO were the most violent music on the face of this Earth. Their new album, *Into the Eye of Satan,* has done absolutely nothing but affirm this title in my mind. Think of CONQUEROR and REVENGE styled war metal, but with a much more ancient torment to their guitar abuse. This is complete and total hate, livid rabies captured to tape. Don't pass on this. (Ted Sweeney) (Hells Headbangers)

DER FADEN "Best Guess" EP

Listening to this album made me think of soundtracks from a 1980s John Hughes movie. It's very upbeat with male and female duo vocals. "Best Guess" sounds like the type of song that you could get a group of teenagers in large sweaters to pump their fists in the air and do a sing along. "Filaments" is just as poppy but maybe more so because of their polished rhyme along breakdown. DER FADEN's vocalist, Rob has a very distinct voice that it stands out on its own. If you're a fan of the THERMALS' Hutch Harris' vocals, you might dig DER FADEN. (Denis) (Dirt Cult)

DETERGENTS "Demo" Download

Straightforward punk rock in with the kind of British accent and cadences that sent shivers up my spine when first hearing punk. "Barry Bullshitter" is an anthem for sure—"you piss on my back and you tell me it's raining!" These folks sound like they can barely play their instruments, but man can they write a hook. Swagger, snot, and sarcasm. (Ray) (detergents.bandcamp.com)

DIESEL DUDES "Hercules Initiative" EP

Man, if this was an instrumental record, I'd be all over it. Unfortunately, it is not. Musically, it's synth-driven horror movie soundtrack type stuff. Think *Halloween III,* and other movies of that ilk. Lyrically, it's one to the dumbest things I've heard. I mean, the first song's about lifting weights and then taking bong hits in the locker room. So dumb. (Dan Agacki) (Detonic)

DIRTY FENCES "Full Tramp" LP

Awesome! Timeless NYC punk somewhere in line with the DICTATORS or maybe pushing the early '80s LA realm. Either way, that's a win for us all. One might argue they're derivative, but what the fuck does that even mean in a post-fourth-dimensional world. I would argue every song is genuinely well-written and catchy as heck—most of them falling squarely in that sweet two to three minute range. This is near perfect for what it is... which is exciting. (JZ) (Slovenly)

DIVERS "Hello Hello" CS

At just under 20 minutes per side, this release was not recorded for a typical punk attention span. The songs are slow and well-recorded enough that DIVERS actually sounds almost like an adult-oriented indie rock band. Especially with the singer's voice in mind, it would make sense to hear them opening for a band like AIRBORNE TOXIC EVENT or MUMFORD AND SONS (feel free to read that as an insult or a compliment). Although the songs are missing something when it comes to catchiness, when you listen closely there are a few moments on the tape where the guitar and bass come through as very emotional. The drummer is consistently on point (and once again, well-recorded), though this might be why the tape feels a little too easy on the ears. At the very least, listening to DIVERS' recordings makes it seem pretty likely that they're a great live band. (Clement Wink) (Stay Punk Tapes)

DOT DASH "Earthquakes & Tidal Waves" LP

D.C. veterans DOT DASH deliver their fourth album and have never sounded so unbelievably tight and catchy. These are ten pop gems in the vein of TEENAGE FANCLUB designed to bring to mind those wild summers of youth where everything seemed incredible and possible, only occasionally realizing otherwise. Hook laden, optimistic, and smart, *Earthquakes & Tidal Waves* is full of earworms best displayed by indie pop tracks like, "The Winter of Discontent" and "Rainclouds." With a lineup boasting members of MINOR THREAT, SWERVEDRIVER, the SATURDAY PEOPLE, and JULIE OCEAN it's no question this band knows what they are doing and have all the polish and chops necessary to be stuck in your head for days. (Chris Barnes) (dotdashdc.bandcamp.com/The Beautiful Music)

ECSTATIC VISION "Sonic Praise" LP

Noisy, driven, psych of the PENTAGRAM or SABBATH variety. Seriously long ass songs though. Of the five tracks, the longest "Astral Plane," clocks in at over 12 minutes! Great grooves one after another that they just hold onto *forever.* Past the too much, beyond the absurd, and into the *locked on* phase—they beat everything to death... and continue beating long after. It's rather astonishing. (Jim) (Relapse)

THE EJECTOR SEATS "...Like Apple Pie..." LP

I feel like either I'm missing something, (not out of the realm of possibility) or this album is missing something. It could be that I'm writing this past the deadline, (Punk Rooles

are for fooles!! I spelled that wrong on purpose. After all, that is true Anachy *[ed. note: I can only assume that one was on purpose too. – Jim]*) or that this album doesn't jump out and grab me - something I get out of the STOOGES, NEW BOMB TURKS, MARKED MEN, HOT SNAKES, JAY REATARD and BASEBALL FURIES. All incredibly killer bands that have a certain amount of arrogance matched by their ability to blow your mind whether it be musically, lyrically, or in theatrics! Anyway, back to the EJECTOR SEATS. Lyrically, it has its moments but nothing where I'm like "*Holy shit, this kills!*" "Status Symbol Slump" and "You Need This" are my favorite cuts on the album. "You Need This," is really good actually opening with a killer snappy riff that is half KISS, a bit of MOTORHEAD and has even a pinch of the MURDER JUNKIES feel to it. Short quick fast and the chorus is infectious: "And you need this and you need that," simple I'll admit but in context of the song very fitting. "Velvet Rope" is a great opening song, and "Another Perfect Day" deserves recognition, the delay on the guitars is a really nice touch! However, it's a challenge to listen to, and at moments it comes a tad too forced and contrived, which can be hard to swallow for anyone that digs the raw feel you get with great garage acts! (Ben Eads) (Collision Course)

FALSE CAUSE "This Flag" CD

Punk for people just getting into punk. Attempts to be political but it really misses the mark. They do a DR. KNOW cover though which is kinda cool I guess. I'll pass on this one. (Scott) (Squidhat)

FATIGUE "Bat Face" EP Download

Fuuuuuuuuck. Ripping punk that teeters on hardcore. The bass tone on this thing sounds so raw it's disgusting. The thing that really sticks out, though, are the songs. These guys can really write a fucking catchy punk song, without sacrificing any energy or intensity. Sometimes this even sounds like some strange hybrid Oi-core. I'm still kinda confused about seeing them open for RADIOACTIVITY in San Francisco, but I'm damn thankful to whoever threw them on the bill—cause these guys almost stole the show. I can't imagine them opening three/four bands bills much longer. (Ray) (Warthog Speak)

FIGHT AMP "Constantly Off" 12"

Blazing, in your face fucking rock. From Philly, which is out of control with great bands right now. Straight forward Noise Rock. Simply Pummeling! (Francisco Ramirez) (Brutal Panda/Lost Tape Collective)

FOUND FOOTAGE "As Far As Far" LP

Straight up heavy alternative/noise rock. I'm sure this would have found huge traction on college radio 20 years ago and some 120 Minutes/Buzz Bin rotation if there was a video. Though, I highly doubt FOUND FOOTAGE would have even gone for that kind of reach. Recorded at (and released by) Dust House—a studio/recording collective in Oklahoma City that records bands for free in exchange for allowing them to put the music on their website as well—this is some pretty legit DIY stuff. Also, don't let the phrase "recorded by a collective" make you think this sounds like shit, 'cause it doesn't. A great recording for the punchy bass/heavy drum/tightly wound sound that these guys have. The only way this could sound better is if one of the Steves recorded it at Electric Audio. Definitely fits in with the whole PRF scene, with a maybe touch more melody that some of those bands. (Ray) (Dust House)

FRENCH EXIT "Guts and Black Stuff" LP

The WEEZER influence is strong with this band. They play a polished, tight style while still maintaining the rough edges that two guys melodically yelling will bring. Lot's of poppy hooks and catchy breakdowns for people who like that kind of thing. Very fitting release from It's Alive! Records. (Chago) (It's Alive!)

FUCKED UP "Year of the Hare" 12"

Not many things can hold my attention for more than 20 minutes. *Year of the Hare* is a two song behemoth of a record that is dying to try but failing miserably. The title track starts with a few minutes of quietly building feedback that fades to acoustic guitars playing a pretty riff that purposely has jarring weird sound glitches during it. After that things just keep changing. Next comes a piano with more sound glitches. By the time they ditch the piano the track is six minutes into what seems like a stream of, "We can do whatever the fuck we want. We're FUCKED UP." The band then kicks into "classic" FU, as in the shitty indie band not the ripping hardcore of early lore. Granted, the main musical part of this bloated mess of sounds and instruments is ok but why add all the other nine plus minutes of boring bits? They let Isa Craig (?) take the mic for a bit and it really doesn't change the feel of the song. They fart around with the main riff some more and then add the pianos and acoustic guitars back in at the end. The other song on this thing is *only* 8:21 minutes. But like the first song it really goes nowhere. It puzzles me people still like this band at this point of their transformation. (Nicolai) (Deathwish Inc.)

FUTURE CRIMES "Future Crimes" EP

Okay, listening to filth is my second passion and as anyone who knows me will tell you, I can quote GG with the best of them. These guys are bears, they like pizza and they are perverts! Homocore, filthy, funny, absurd, and kings of the basement!! That being said, it's quick, it's offensive and fun. Think '80s, think MINOR THREAT with a perverted potty mouth! It's fun and made me laugh. It's a lot like reading *Naked Lunch* and listening to MINOR THREAT at the same time. (Ben Eads) (No Profit)

GENTLEMEN PREFER BLOOD "Used Books and Guns" LP

Catchy Los Angelean pop punk that reminds me of *Paper + Plastick*-era DOPAMINES records, which is ironic because this is an It's Alive release. Pretty straightforward, mid-tempo punk stuff, with some breathing room to veer off into a weird time change or random math-y drum fill every once in a while. Real talk time: I've avoided listening to this band for a while now just because I couldn't get past the band name. I have tons of mutual friends with this band and have heard nothing but great things about them, but I just couldn't get past the name, okay? I'm sorry! And look, I realize I'm a glass houser: I run the gamut of bad band names, believe me. Send a SASE for the entire compendium of all the terribly named bands I've been or currently still am in. The first track on this record is interesting, though; it almost sounds like it should be the album ender, going into a repetitive chorus and guitar loop over and over, with an interesting, almost *too* quick fade out, before fading back in to actually finish the song. I know this trick! Who fucked up on that last take, boys? Don't lie and call it art—this is a studio trick so someone didn't have to punch in or re-mic some drums! *Tell us the truth*! I'll say this: GENTLEMEN PREFER BLOOD as a band is 100% better than their band name. This is a perfect addition to the It's Alive roster, so that's really all you need to know if you like that label. (I do.) (JPool) (It's Alive!)

GINO AND THE GOONS "(Don't) Push Your Luck" EP

Sloppy Budget Rock in the Rip Off Records/Radio X vein. There were a shit load of bands doing this sort of thing 15-20 years ago, but I'm not hearing it much these days. It's worth occasional spins, but it won't have you selling off your SUPERCHARGER records. (Dan Agacki) (Pelican Pow Wow)

GOLDEN PELICANS "Oldest Ride, Longest Line" 12"

One of my favorite bands from the late '90s, early '00s was the TIGHT BROS FROM WAY BACK WHEN. Their mix of '70s rock riffs, semi-cheesy lyrics, and their AC/DC wannabe singer made them fun and interesting but with just enough punk guts to stand out. The GOLDEN PELICANS are definitely trying to ride that same feel of punks making some good old fashion rock'n'roll, but to my ears this falls a hair flat. The riffs are killer and take me back to being a dumb 16-year-old getting caught playing air guitar. But the problem is all nine songs are that same riff, and it's like they don't want to take the tempo to the next level. I bet seeing these guys in a beer soaked basement with all your tight bros would make for one hell of a show though. (Nicolai) (Florida's Dying)

GOUGE AWAY "Demo" CS

Discordant, urgent, punk with swirling guitars. This is post-revolution summer punk, and it's still fresh as ever. Relatively simple and short song structures, but bleeding with genuine pain from a sick, sick world. It's not the

person I want to be—to relate so entirely to this, but alas, it's the person I am, and it's reassuring to feel that connection, however fleeting. This is fucking rad. The mix is amazing, the songs are great, and the emotion is honest and pure, if only a little juvenile. Disturbed and angry screaming about alienation and nihilism. Three songs that fly by too fast. I want nothing to do with this kind of darkness, but at the same time I so want more. (Jim) (gougeaway@gmail.com)

GREASY HEARTS/SUN VOYAGER "Grease Village" split CS

SUN VOYAGER reminds me a lot of THEE OH SEES, which is fine with me. That's kind of the trend right now, innit? Unless you break the formula, heavy psychedelic rock is pretty unfuckwithable and that's why the genre has been getting aped super hard lately. This is enough for me to check out their full length, so mission accomplished. On the B-side we have GREASY HEARTS, who were also new to me. I can see why these bands did a split together, cause the more I smoke the more I like it. GREASY HEARTS probably has a tour budget that includes multiple gallons of that liquid you pour into a smoke machine. (Nick Rouley) (Sloppy Pile)

GROANING GROVE / HOLY SHIT! split 7"

OK, so we all know and love HOLY SHIT!. No question there. Solid, they are always solid. And live? I'll get to HOLY SHIT! in a bit, but oh my! Next time I see Eric and the rest of the fellas I will need to thank them for doing a split with this band I may have not otherwise heard of. GROANING GROVE--people get into them!!!! I think I may have worn out this side of the split already. "Earth Blues" is one of the meanest songs I've heard in a while. It's so tough and hard but so rock and roll. I love when a band is so menacing without having to be fast. I've gone onto the internet and started looking up anything else by them. I hate to sound lazy but this is like a HC version of GUITAR WOLF. Less garage, more HC. Fans of POISON IDEA are going to love this. HOLY SHIT!: seven great short blasts on one side of a 7", lol. Yup, you heard me. You get seven songs on one side. So good, the angst in "Judgement Night Soundtrack" jumps out of the needle and chokes the shit out of you. Go find this 7", but more importantly go out and discover GROANING GROVE. Only downside to this little gem; the artwork blows so hard. (Benny) (Snuffy Smiles)

GROSS "Demo" Download

Spastic Florida powerviolence. Creepy and angry. A perfectly named band, definitely. Five songs, with one of them being nearly as long as the other four put together. There are touches of pigfuck and that kind of grungy, emo-violencey style that WHITE WALLS had a few years ago. Maybe even a modern take on IN/HUMANITY. Whatever you want to call it, it's good. (Ray) (gross.bandcamp.com)

HADES MINING CO. / WATER TORTURE split 7"

First impression: art is pretty standard dollar bin pixelated black & white brutal imagery (earns points with me, I'm a sucker for it). HADES MINING CO. is total garbage noisecore, the kind where you hear 50 short blasts that constitute as songs on one side of a 7". If that's your thing then you already know you will probably want this. Lo-fi and sloppy, but punk as fuck. Next, WATER TORTURE... I am biased as I have released two WATER TORTURE records myself, but yeah they are the best contemporary in the game (the game being drum and bass powerviolence (the grinding kind not the stoned out MITB kind)). WATER TORTURE consistently rules on every release and this split is no exception. I think this record is a year or so old, and WT is done at this point (R.I.P.), now go hit the discogs and catch 'em all (the records you dolt). (R. Komen) (Continuum)

HADES MINING CO. / SLOTH split 7"

HADES MINING CO. material on this record sounds like slow mutant noise rock a la RUSTED SHUT. Perverse lyrics that are nonsensical and dumb... I dig it, I think? SLOTH is harsh noise wall that does its job by filling their entire side with a constant crunching wall the whole way through, if you're into that sort of thing. (R. Komen) (Continuum)

HADES MINING CO. / HARSH SUPPLEMENT split 7"

This slab is 33rpm but I played the HADES MINING CO. side on 45 to hurry up and get through it, just for the fuck of it (this is the fourth HMC split I am reviewing here). It actually sounded more fucked up that way, so maybe they'd be into me reviewing it like that. Anyway, lot of samples on their side of this one, and of course more noisecore insanity of course. HARSH SUPPLEMENT I played at normal speed, and they were pretty awesome actually. Total mesmerizing noisecore that never let up. It really sucked me in and held my full attention. (R. Komen) (Continuum)

THE HEADIES / PLOW UNITED split EP

Fuck yes! I'm a total sucker for energetic and melodic punk rock. I'm super stoked about this split because it brings together two bands that fit my description of what amazing punk rock should sound like. No frills, no extra unneeded complexity, just good punk rock. PLOW UNITED knows how to do it and have been doing it for years. They contribute two songs to this six song split, and my favorite one has to be the first track, "Gary Gygax." The HEADIES, just like PLOW UNITED, is a Delaware pop-punk band with several very good records. They contributed four songs that are all awesome. These guys have the right influences, and they know how to write a catchy fucking song! High energy, melodic, and clean. (Daniel Becker) (Self Aware)

HELEN LOVE "Pogo Pogo" CD

Super charged pop! This reminds me of the electric light parade at Disneyland mixed with some sort of soft drink commercial, or like the Japanese tracks on Dance Dance Revolution. On first listen you can be certain that HELEN LOVE is greatly influenced by the RAMONES and probably likes to jump around and eat a lot of candy. Heavy synthesized vocals, with a cool European accent make the vocals feel almost mechanical. I imagine that this band would be super fun to see live, if I could only make it to Wales. (Danny B.) (Elefant)

HEXIS "XI" LP

First off, killer fucking layout and packaging. Looks like a lot of thought and heart went into this gatefold so I can respect that. File this record under "blackened metallic hardcore"??? I hate to use that term "blackened" when applied to any kind of punk/HC/whatever because it sounds so stupid, but it really is all I could come up with to describe this. I will say that this record is very well recorded and mastered; it was the loudest of the batch I was given to review for this issue. Music sounds brutal all around, very heavy. I guess it could be considered contemporary black metal because the black metal element is very prominent here, but it has all this other stuff going on that gives the band a unique sound. I was into it for a while but then kind of zoned out because my attention span is shit. I don't normally like this kind of stuff but enjoyed it for the most part so maybe there is something more that is viscerally catching my attention. Has a "grind-y" feel (and I use that term loosely) at times and overall the assault never lets up. Constantly pummeling drums with no breaks, just the way I like it. Elements of doom creep in when it actually lets up and is slow for about five seconds. Interesting blend of genres, HEXIS from Copenhagen definitely pulls it off tastefully. (R. Komen) (Dead Tank)

HI HO SILVER, AWAY! "Chore" LP

Honest, and transparent is the theme of this record. The vocals talk more than sing, and I personally enjoyed the journey they took me through; and at times it was bleak, but also optimistic, but ultimately worth it. It was real, and at no point in time did I feel the content was forced or contrived. Which is refreshing to me, since I feel most bands/artists tend to want to separate themselves from their music. HI HO SILVER, AWAY! is the exact opposite. After the record I felt like I knew them. Which I don't! Seriously ask Ray he knows me... and he will tell you! *[ed note: Leave me out of this, Ben! I don't know who you know. – Ray]* Anyway, musically impressive, nothing mind blowing but good, at moments it's full blown pop punk minus the anthemic choruses. Other moments have a REPLACEMENTS/OFF WITH THEIR HEADS/BOB MOULD/HOLD STEADY feel to it. BOB MOULD being the most prominent because much like MOULD, you really get to know these guys through their music. Okay, negatives: It's a tad emo, but dude the music is tight and the album is quick! So pack a bowl, you worked 12 hours, you just showered and you got a minute to yourself. Get introspective!! (Ben Eads) (Its Alive!)

HIDDEN WORLD "Singles" CD

Well, they were supposed to have me review the fast powerviolence and ignorant tough guy shit, but what are ya gonna do? Take it from a truly unbiased opinion...this is very, very good. It is noticeably "rock and roll" sounding but also very moody and depressing mid-paced melodic punk. I wanna say you could mix bands like KILLING JOKE and DEATH IN JUNE with bands like MODERN LIFE IS WAR and the SUICIDE FILE and you'd wind up with something like this; I'd even say there's a HUSKER DU and later era NAKED RAYGUN influence here. There are some spacey slower moments that bring to mind ENVY or ISIS too. The vocals are real gruff and can get a little aggressive at times, but HIDDEN WORLD is by no means a hardcore band on this recording. Honestly, this is just really fucking good. Judging by their names, these dudes might be from Europe somewhere, but they don't specify. Kudos to them for putting out a solid EP that even a simple-minded moron like me can appreciate. (John) (Antena Krzyku Recording Co.)

HOPE DRONE "Cloak of Ash" CD/LP/ Digital

If there's one thing I hate, it's when some asshole gets the bright idea to put some "post" in his black metal. For those who don't know, post-black metal is nothing like, say, post-hardcore. The way post-hardcore accented and built upon the MINOR THREAT template really fucking mattered. Post-hardcore bands like RITES OF SPRING and EMBRACE changed lives. The only thing that post-black metal might be credited with helping to change is underpants. "Why?" you ask—because it's so shitty! (Man, you walked right into that one.) Post-black metal is essentially equal parts *In the Nightside Eclipse, Loveless, and Lift Yr. Skinny Fists Like Antennas to Heaven!* But here is the component that fucks everything right up for post-black metal: these bands produce the living daylights out of their records. I can only imagine post-black metal bands like HOPE DRONE (Australia's answer to DEAFHEAVEN), have it in their head that things like timbre and sound color are dated notions. And those three aforementioned albums, disparate as they are, all have one unifying bond: a certain mysterious aura peeking out of troubling fidelity. And that's why listeners return, to keep discovering accidents hidden in the wash and buzz of their production. In the crystalline engineering of HOPE DRONE's *Cloak of Ash* (a troubling misnomer if there ever was one,), everything is right there on the surface. This is WYSIWYG metal if there ever was such a thing, resulting in a forgettably disposable listen. But here's my biggest problem with all of this. It's not HOPE DRONE. They're one of hundreds of safe and inoffensive post-black metal bands who in all likelihood don't know any better. These bands will come and go and that's just fine. The factor in this equation that I take genuine umbrage with is Relapse Records. The institution that I once held with such regard I now find myself mourning. I recall a time when Relapse was the gold standard for filthy metal in the U.S. The label that once championed blown-out milestones such as *Noise-A-Go-Go, Urine Junkies, Onward to Golgotha, Kill Whitey, Morbid Florist, Necrology, Honky Reduction...* I'll stop there, but trust me when I use the word "institution.» That very same organization now cuts its teeth churning out blasécore ad nauseam, leaving me staring at this HOPE DRONE record and quietly whispering to myself "what the fuck?" (Ted Sweeney) (Relapse)

HORRIBLE THINGS "Everybody Else" LP

Right out of the gates this album is slow and deliberate. These poppy riffs would fit in nicely with Hopeless Records compilation 10-15 years ago. The vocals are high pitched and clean, not unlike radio-friendly darlings, JIMMY EAT WORLD. The songs are short and not very varying. These type of albums always remind me of emo bands that are heavily inspired by AVAIL but err on the conventional side rather than the rock and roll side like RED CROSS or the DWARVES. The slow jam at the end of the album is the most interesting, a simple catchy riff repeated with dirtier guitars rather than the shimmering Marshall stack "chug-chug" guitars on most of the other tracks. I can see this band going over well at the Gainesville fest. (Alex) (Secret Pennies)

HOSPITAL JOB "The Believer" LP

Unless you were around Carbondale when they first started, you probably don't know that Luke McNeill was originally a guitarist and singer for the COPYRIGHTS and only moved to drums when their first drummer relocated to Missouri in 2002. Now he's got a grown-up job in Springfield, IL, and can't tour with that band all that much. But with all the extra time he's been pulling double song writing duties for the past few years, finally stepping back in front of the mic with guitar in hand. Needless to say, if you're at all familiar with the pop-punk/power-pop sounds of the COPYRIGHTS, you'll know what to expect here. The nice thing though is that this record doesn't sound like a bunch of rejected COPYRIGHTS tracks. "Confusing Times" has a Todd Congelliere/TOYS THAT KILL sound to it, "The Scrivner" is so laid back and melodic, almost sounding like some classic Merge Records. In fact "laid back" is probably a good way to describing this album. It saunters and swaggers more than it straight-ahead rocks. The lyrics seem rather personal and self-reflective, and less anthemic than Luke's work with the COPYRIGHTS ("Confessions of a Former Waxdoll" referencing one of Luke's rather locally popular early bands). Definitely recommended if you like your poppy punk with some heart. (Ray) (It's Alive!)

ICE VOLT / PETER J. WOODS split 7"

I put the ICE VOLT side on first. It is creepy as fuck. Chilling static, haunting moaning tonal discordant noise with screaming doomy vocals. The lyrics are printed, so I followed along. Its awful plodding minimalist poetry with absolutely no direction or conclusion. Embarrassing. The PETER J WOODS side is even more daunting—the title is great, "This Filth Ridden Existence," but the backwards vocals and long pick scrapes go seemingly nowhere. This side's poetry has a conclusion at least... albeit a trite one. It's not about the lyrics though, that's for sure. This sort of thing frustrates me. It's interesting, to a degree, but it makes me feel crazy. My only emotional takeaway is of utter confusion. Have the people who make this sort of thing heard how awesome every other kind of music is in relation?! I can imagine this audio being used in a Don Hertzfeldt cartoon—now that would be fucking cool—primarily because I love Don Hertzfeldt; but as a stand-alone record I don't see the point. (Jim) (Insides Music)

IDES OF GEMINI "Carthage" EP

Dark, mostly acoustic guitar and sparse, almost tribal drums (I'm fairly certain there's not a kick drum or snare on this entire record) driven by hauntingly beautiful and dissonant female vocals, *this* is the kind of record that, finding myself trapped in a sadist's lair, I might truly fear for my life were this the soundtrack being played whilst locked in a dark room, awaiting my own puny demise. This band strips away the bravado that surrounds heavy music and lays bare the underlying motifs of unflinching opposition to established norms and mores (religious or otherwise) and promises torturous death to those zealots and hypocrites that for too long have spoiled our mortal realm. On the "Carthage" side, the lyrics "Disinter your holy scribes/ Your laws do not exist without light/ Celestial law abides," followed by a chorus sung in Latin drive this point home. The "Strange Fruit" side ends with only tambourine hits until the needle hits the end of the record, which, on the face of it, may not sound foreboding, but here is somehow evil as fuck, and I mean that in the best way possible. This band is heavy and brutal without once sounding heavy or brutal. Buy this record. (JPool) (Magic Bullet)

JAMIE AND THE DEBT "No, Life Isn't" CS

Fuzzed out, lo-fi, drum machine driven, hella feminist, solo dance punk. This is some really fucking amazing stuff. I just with this came with a lyric sheet cause what I think I'm hearing is some pretty awesome stuff. The vocals are *goddamn amazing.* The singer reminds more than a little of PINK PILE's Vanessa Asswipe—though I know it's not her because this was recorded in Buffalo. Seriously, the A-side of this tape is *perfect.* Oh wait, the B-side opens with something that might fit on Crass Records and also has a track that sounds like a non-day-glo FUZZBOX song. There's so little info with this release! Total Mysterious Lady Feministcore! *I want to know more! I*

want to hear more! Gimme something, more, please! (Ray) (jaimeandthedebt.bandcamp.com)

Lê ALMEIDA "Paralelplasmos" LP/CD

The first time I quit drinking was on a camping trip in Big Sur, watching the waves hit the rocks, so hungover I wanted to die. LÊ ALMEIDA's woozy guitar fuzz reminds me of the drive home, tight coastal highway curves with the windows down and wind blasting my face. Optimism overtook nausea, and I felt like I might never have to drink again, as long as I could breathe ocean air. Of course, it didn't exactly work out that way. LÊ ALMEIDA hails from Brazil, with a few song titles in English and lyrics in Portuguese, which I can't understand, yet the emotions behind the music still come through. Whispery tender vocals in the vein of KIM DEAL/THE BREEDERS. The guitar noodlings remind me of a cleaned up BROKEN STRINGS, and similarly this has a one man band/bedroom project vibe. Layered, dreamy jams for fans of lo-fi pop, in the vein of GBV and PIXIES. (gaybobz) (IFB / Transfusão Noise)

LEGENDARY WINGS "Do You See?" LP

What is it about Dirtnap Records that makes them release such good shit? This record came out last year on the popular label and it doesn't fall short of any of the other Dirtnap bangers. Energetic, raw, and melodic tunes that might not make you want to burn a bank, but definitely gets you to wanna shake your ass and sing along, and you will be singing along after just a few spins. Almost all the songs on this album are insanely catchy and get stuck in your head. This is a solid pop-punk record in the same vein as JAY REATARD, the MARKED MEN, and LOW CULTURE. If you like catchy, lo-fi, garage-rock influenced pop-punk—you should check out LEGENDARY WINGS! (Daniel Becker) (Dirtnap)

LETHAL OVERDOSE "Unfinished Business-Reissue" LP

I'm calling this LP a reissue because the back cover says it was originally recorded on July 10, 1988, but I can't find any information on the record itself or on COLLISION COURSE's website that says where or if it was actually ever released in the first place. Fast, fast, fast hardcore from Sydney, Australia that has more blast beats and incredibly shredding palm mutes than one would expect from a lot of '80s hardcore, American or otherwise. Based on all the fliers that line the insert of this record, it looks like this band had a pretty extensive history in the scene during their tenure. They're listed among 20 or so other bands as "legends" on the Australian Hardcore Wiki page, too, if that does anything for ya. Yellow, black, and red marbled vinyl and great sound quality for a recording that could've easily gotten lost to the terrible sands of time. Definitely recommended if you're trying to fill in the gaps of a hardcore history you may not have known existed, you xenophobic prick! (JPool) (Collision Course)

LIFES / SUFFERING MIND split EP

A quick disclaimer that LIFES is from Milwaukee and I have known them and their projects for well over a decade. I think I may have seen Dave perform as long ago as 1998. Anyway, LIFES is a very fine tuned blasting machine of insanely precise drumming and riffs. A bass and drums two piece with an intentional noise track that only intensifies how brutal this recording sounds. Maybe closer to powerviolence than grind. The lyrics to "Guilt" are awesome. Really all of them are, that one is just kind of funny and not depressing as hell like the other sociopolitcal ones are. Overall LIFES doesn't sound like any other hardcore bands exactly, but I would just say it's heavy hardcore. Oh and its five songs on a 7" so they are all rather short. SUFFERING MIND is apparently a prolific as hell London group. Their bandcamp has approximately 600 records on it. This is pretty kickass grindcore. They sound more like traditionally metal grind, but they mix it up good. Not just straight blasts, got your regular fastcore beat, some classic doublekick parts raging... all around this rips. They got all the important vocals styles represented for this genre (you know a scream-y guy and then the guttural guy...), got a sample in there. If someone was confused about what a grind record sounds like, I could happily put their side of this split on and call it a template for what a solid side of grindcore split 7" should sound like. (Apnea) (Halo of Flies)

LIFES / SUFFERING MIND split EP

Every split record has a winner and a loser. That's a fact. I don't ever remember buying a split where I listened to the bands equally. LIFES win this one, no contest. Their songs show incredible depth for only being a two piece band. At their core, they're a hardcore band, but bits and pieces of various sub-genres pop up all over their side. And then it's over. Just blazes by, which is exactly what I want from a record. SUFFERING MIND is not my thing at all. Triggered drums, metal riffs, and death metal grunts have never done anything for me. (Dan Agacki) (Halo of Flies)

LINDA GUILALA "Xeristar" EP

Spanish trio LINDA GUILALA push things forward with their beautiful and catchy six song EP, *Xeristar.* Blending electro-pop and shoegaze, there are clear nods to MY BLOODY VALENTINE, but LINDA GUILALA wouldn't be out of place sharing a stage with contemporary indie pop acts like STARS or CRYING. While it's easy to get lost in the lush keyboard parts and hypnotically hushed melodic vocals, it's important to recognize the layers of thrashy guitar sonics and spot on drumbeats that are crucial in bringing the whole sound together. This one will get the kids dancing. (Chris Barnes) (Elefant)

LOCRIAN "Infinite Dissolution" CD/LP/Digital

Here is a quick lesson in aesthetics I'm going to call "when polish becomes problem." Now pay attention, because this is going to be on the exam. An archaeologist goes to the dig and finds a rock in the ground. This little rock is proof of some serious archaeological shit, like Indiana Jones saying 'forget the grail, check out this rock.' So the archaeologist is thrilled, and wants to display it at a museum for the world to see. But as he's looking at it, imagining his find on a plinth encased in glass, he can hear people saying "This rock sure does prove everything I've come to understand about the world that we live in is a lie, but it 's awful dirty, isn't it?" So he takes a towel to it, brushing all the heavy dirt off. "Wow," he thinks, "you can definitely see the nuances of the rock with more refinement now." Because he cleaned it a little, and it helped so much he starts to polish it. And polish it some more. And a little bit more. He spends the entire night polishing it. And the next day. And the day after that. He polishes the rock until his fingers have bled and his hands simply won't allow him to polish it any further. He then lies down to get some rest, because tomorrow he's bringing the amazing rock to the museum for display. The next day comes, and he presents the rock to the museum curator, who looks at him with confusion. "I thought you told me that you had a rock that would challenge every notion I had about the world we live in? All I see here is a shiny ball bearing." Alright now pencils away, what did we learn here? If you polish and refine something so much, eventually you will remove all of its character. With continued refinement things like dynamics and the charms of accident are lost. Unfortunately, this is exactly what LOCRIAN have done with "Infinite Dissolution." They have taken the post-metal model of mixing ambient prog and black metal (a questionable practice in and of itself--but that conversation is a different box of berries altogether,) and have taken all the grit and grain out of the equation, and through wild abuse of compression and equalization, refined their product into a banal wash of sanitized meh. Fortunately, audiences are given plenty of advance notice of what they can expect to hear on the record with its computer-generated future landscape album artwork that looks as though it was lifted right off of a STRATOVARIUS or SYMPHONY X record. I think it's a safe bet to say, if you have a bunch of albums with this style of artwork in your collection, maybe you'll consider taking a chance on LOCRIAN's new LP. If you don't already own a bunch of this nonsense, don't come back to me saying you weren't given fair warning. (Ted Sweeney) (Relapse)

LYSP "Demo 2015" Download

Scorching, melting, crusty, raw D-beat with an equally raw recording. I can't make out a single thing that Ashley is screaming about, but I don't fucking care. She sounds like she's wailing at the grave of the world. Some well used samples too. Music for the black clad and bepatched punx. (Ray) (lysp.bandcamp.com)

MANNEQIN "Nothing / Don't Look" CS

The first track is a minimal synth jam with some lo-fi indie guitar work. The B-side steals the show here, a rather straightforward song with some cool swagger and perfectly (dis) affected vocals. This is my kind of punk, the kind that people would argue if it's even punk at all. Well it is. And it's good. (Ray) (Not Normal Tapes)

MEAN JEANS / UNDERGROUND RAILROAD TO CANDYLAND split EP

This record was released in 2013, so there's a good chance you've either already heard it, or decided not to hear it based on a review you've read. Although, if you're reading *this*, I assume you're either in one of the mentioned bands, or know that this record is obviously a slam dunk if you're into punk—two of the scene's biggest darlings together at last on vinyl? Of course. It's a good record, and if you've never heard of UNDERGROUND RAILROAD TO CANDYLAND or MEAN JEANS, this is as good a release as any to check either band out. Both sides are great representations of each band, so I won't waste your time describing either band's sound, because there's plenty of that already out there. I will say, though, that the labels on this record are switched, so just know that when you put on the MEAN JEANS side, you're hearing URTC, and vice versa. Remember when that happened with the SASS DRAGONS/PARTY GARBAGE split 7"? It was the punk disaster of the year! Man, neither band nor Let's Pretend Records ever really recovered. Gosh, I hope everyone in both bands and the bigwigs over at It's Alive can bounce back from this, I truly do. (JPool) (It's Alive!)

MEAN JEANS "Singles" LP

I love the MEAN JEANS because they are like the kind of band I could go see live and I could like shake up a two liter bottle of soda and spray it all over the crowd, and I bet everyone would be mostly okay with it. This is a collection of a bunch of previously released MEAN JEANS songs I already know and love, 20 tracks of non-stop feel good jammers about an inability to ever stop partying. Super catchy, repetitive, "Ramonescore" pop punk with funny lyrics and a butt-load of riffs. If the RAMONES were alive to see MEAN JEANS they would probably just stand in the corner and be like "Man... what is *up* with those dudes?" But then they would probably all get pizza together or something. (Danny B.) (Dirtnap)

MEFITIC "Woes of Mortal Devotion" CD/LP

Sometimes you find yourself wading through so much not-all-that-bad, but particularly unmemorable content that it starts to bleed together. As competency with the craft and familiarity with nuance allow for bands to churn out very, very forgettably decent recordings, it becomes obvious that the hollow feeling repeated listens of these records eschew is in fact a complete absence of net interest. Once the stock tropes of the style have been nailed with perfect precision, why doesn't our hair stick on end like it did the first time we heard this style? It's that je ne said quoi, that essence—and once in a very, very blue moon a band just has that essence. Italy's MEFITIC have that essence. Playing in a style of particularly extreme metal referred to as bestial or war metal. For the unfamiliar, a pretty simple parallel you could draw would be to say war metal is a reaction to the CELTIC FROST's *Morbid Tales* in the same manner that DISCHARGE is a reaction to *London Calling*. And MEFITIC are fucking doing it, and most importantly, they are doing it with *the essence*, via totally bestial blasting war metal that you'll not soon forget. For those who have even the foggiest of what I'm going on about, think total raise-the-dead, heavy as all fuck riffing, which dials back the cacophony of their previous demos with a sound that fits right in between *Onward to Golgotha*-era Incantation and Dead's pre-MAYHEM death metal affair MORBID. Highly recommended. (Ted Sweeney) (Nuclear War Now! Productions)

MERCY MUSIC "When I Die, I'm Taking You With Me" CD

Oh boy, I'm pretty torn with this one. I'm not offended by this music, but I certainly don't like it. It immediately took me back to my days as a teenager in the late '90s/early '00s. I close my eyes and I'm back in a church basement watching overly dramatic teens get extremely emotional to ULTIMATE FAKEBOOK or SPITALFIELD. You're there to check out RISE AGAINST, who is headlining even though it's one of their first shows. You leave 30 seconds into their first song. Those were the days! If you're 17-years-old and getting laid but haven't experimented with marijuana yet, then this might be for you. If you're an adult person in your 30s go ahead a buy another 1970s Canadian punk record instead. (Nick Rouley) (Sloppy Pile)

MINERAL GIRLS "Cozy Body" CS

This is absolutely an indie-rock record. A more interesting take on woo-woo music found in the sound tracks of new, hip date night films but with a bit more of a GUIDED BY VOICES take on it. Swirling and dreamy, this band is probably pretty interesting live especially if they play fucking loud. I can imagine pouring myself some tea and rearranging the furniture. The songs go back and forth from driving to interesting and surprising instrumentation kind of like the indie weirdos of Athens, GA. The name, however, reminds me of a word I recently learned in Microcosm's new book *Manspressions*: Manguise—a band with a female-centric name that is made up of all dudes. These songs are entirely catchy and I recommend it to anyone who is a fan of the MAGNETIC FIELDS and the like. (Alex) (Self Aware)

MOIST "Secreted" CS

Research indicates this is available as a cassette release (with digital d/l) from Detonic Recordings. Looks cool and handcrafted in a single use resin case. This band was around in the early '90s and that's a good place to start to describe the sound. It could fit in the same area as weird shit like SLINT, but also sounds tortured like some JESUS LIZARD songs. The recordings are very minimalist in nature, more I listen it has a bit of an industrial vibe that was popular in that era. Tons of vocal effect that works really well with the often herky-jerky riffs and beats. I also feel a distinctly British vibe in some aspects of the rhythms. I think people would refer to this as post-punk most times, but don't take that to mean that it all has one sound. They keep it interesting with many different styles between each song. After finishing, I have to say this was worth the reissue and would recommend it to anyone who has any taste for BIG BLACK, JESUS LIZARD, or mid 80's art rock. I wonder if Kevin DeBroux has heard this... This is very good. (Apnea) (Detonic Recordings)

MOON (Australia) "Render of the Veils" CD

This album sounds just like XASTHUR's album *To Violate the Oblivious* if it were pushed through a big reverb tank. And this isn't me snarking hyperbolic in the interest of the record review—that is exactly what it sounds like. If hearing *To Violate...* a little heavier in the echo department and with thinner production sounds like something you'd be into; you can either pick the new MOON record up from Moribund or you could set it up yourself with that XASTHUR CD that's been in the back of your dead Camry since 2006 and a HOLY GRAIL box. Same difference. (Ted Sweeney) (Moribund Cult)

MULTIPLE MAN "Guilt Culture" EP

Dark and dancy with a moody tempo. It does a good job capturing the dynamics of mixing funky, synth, EDM kinda shit that you would find on a rare 12" single from the '80s. The dark minimal wave wannabe trend is kinda out of control in the USA. Not sure what it's like in Australia right now, but these guys seem like they got their gear and sound on lock. Will definitely be keeping an eye on them. (Chris Case) (Detonic Recordings)

N213 "Bastard" CS

Short heavy punk freak spazzes bursts of rough pop lock grooves. Dark, moody, noisy, soft, howly, sentimental beauty at different tempos and a fantastic cover of the FALL. The mix is a little raw and dirty but intentionally clear fuzz gives the tape a solid aesthetic. This one man band takes you on a short journey with many ups and downs. Each track is sure to be dubbed on a mix of any kind—Nic covers a lot of bases in a short time, leave me wanting more...yes, please! (Josh Vidal) (night-people.org) (Vancouver, Canada)

NECROMANCY "Ancient Wrath" 12"MLP

Necromancy are part of Nuclear War Now!'s archaeological efforts: to make sure that all bands making music prior to 1990 who might have

been sonically akin to SARCOFAGO, MYSTIFIER, or BLASTPHEMY; or influenced by CELTIC FROST, SODOM, and BATHORY are properly indexed and re-released. The act of preservation is a noble pursuit for the metal community, and with that said, sometimes these records just weren't all that good. Case in point: the *Ancient Wrath* 12". At its most compelling, NECROMANCY play Hellenic metal which, during mid-paced sections, sounds not unlike FABIO FRIZZI's more atmospheric soundtrack work. (NECROMANCY, thankfully, don't try their hand at the proggy fusion end of the FRIZZI-worship spectrum.) Unfortunately, the fun ends there with lots of painfully mistake-ridden, somber thrash metal seemingly devoid of any urgency or passion which might excuse such an immature execution. I'd love to have a friend in my life who kept up with every metal release, good and bad, so that when I went over and shit all over the tone-deaf wanking coming from his stereo, he could then school me on how, alongside ROTTING CHRIST and VARATHRON; this NECROMANCY was a milestone in the Greek metal underground... *duh.* Unfortunately, none of my friends are that cool and without the prodding of my imaginary friends (who may or may not be named Cliff Necroburton,) I can't ever see myself throwing *Ancient Wrath* on again. (Ted Sweeney) (Nuclear War Now! Productions)

NEGATIVE VIBES "...Talks Shit!" CS

Sloppy early '80s UK style punk that doesn't venture past the straight-ahead three note punk some of us love. This tape is definitely lo-fi, and sounds sort of like anarcho punk recording inside the singer's pocket. If you dig this style you may like this tape, that being said, it certainly doesn't push any boundaries save for a random synth-y goof-off ending both sides. (Chago) (self-released)

NERVOSAS "Nervosas" LP

The underground music scene is still not dead in 2015, and it is thanks to records like this one from NERVOSAS that keeps my faith strong in the whole thing. This self-titled LP is a complete ripper from start to finish, breathing new life into goth-tinged dark punk. Many of the frantic guitar leads are reminiscent of WHITE LUNG (especially "Moral Panic" and "Temporary Address"), but the songs retain a passion and originality to which WHITE LUNG merely aspires. Male vocals (complete with a faux-British accent) dominate the melodies, but gorgeous harmonies from the female guitarist add depth and drive that might send a few chills down your spine. If you haven't heard this band yet, fix that now. Highly recommended. (Sami Fink) (Dirtnap)

NO PROBLEM "Already Dead" LP

Middle-of-the-road punk. It's the kind of record that sounds alright when someone puts it on at a party, but I'd never put it on at home. Every song's super catchy, but to a fault. By the third or fourth song, it's a little tiring. It's kind of surprising these guys aren't bigger, though. The production's big, the band's tight, and the vocals are melodic without being wimpy. Kinda reminds me of DOA, and I'm not just saying that because they're Canadian. (Dan Agacki) (Deranged)

NO PROBLEM "Kid Killer" EP

NO PROBLEM is a heavy punk band from Edmonton, AB that toes the line between straight ahead hardcore and old school skate punk like AGGRESSION. "Killing Game" is exactly what I expect from them. They did go for a Deranged vibe on the last track "Never See the Sun." This is a good EP. Short and to the point, and has the feel of something called "Kid Killer." I assume its physical format is a 7". (Apnea) (Deranged)

NOTCHES "Huge" EP

Indie infused pop-punk from New Hampshire. Mid-tempo beats and riffs that range from melancholy to melodically uplifting with nice and sharp bass lines. This band has some fucking heart and emotion, and they know how to convey it through their music. This 7" starts with the track "888," which was previously released on the band's first demo that came out about a year and a half before. Apparently, someone from this band was in BILLY RAYGUN, and that's pretty fucking cool. NOTCHES is definitely more of an indie band and if you are a fan of bands like SUPERCHUNK and the likes, you are in for a treat with this one. Every song on this 7" is top shelf! (Daniel Becker) (Hip Kid)

NOTHING BAND "selfs" Download

No wave as fuck. This is gross dissonant music. It's very clearly disturbed. So much noise and tin. It's hard for me to discern properly, but I'd say this is less structured than Max's previous project UZI RASH—but definitely along the same lines. I'd be wrong if I tried to guess what instruments are involved here, but it's all very dissonant. The repetitious nature of the songs hold the whole thing together pretty well. This would be a great band to slam a couple beers to in a basement at an early show—to step outside into the setting summer sun with most of the night ahead of you and already a nice buzz. With music minimized to pulpy mash right in front of you, what else could possibly lay ahead? (Jim) (nothing-band.bandcamp.com/album/selfs)

OLD FRIENDS "It's Not Working Out" EP

It's hella poppy. I mean so poppy it bursts from the seams!! From the beginning of the record, which opens with the *Rugrats* jingle from the *actual show*!! Seriously! This isn't for you serious punker who feels that we need to discuss issues and run for congress, much like an Al Gore with a mohawk that doesn't wear a leather jacket because its animal abuse!!! I refer to those punks as the fun police, and these youthful derelicts are fun police Kryptonite!! The shits got speed and decent guitar licks, vocals are good, the content is incredibly youthful. I smile when a 23 year old tells me how drunk he gets on Jameson, or they are an alcoholic, but at the same time I would kill it! I mean I'd stab four virgin goats to be in their shoes and surf and drink without regrets... and I'm from Warrenville, Illinois! #icantsurf!!! #bastards #welldone (Ben Eads) (It's Alive!)

OXYGEN DESTROYER CS

Blown-out hardcore with some pretty sweet Godzilla samples, mostly about, well, Oxygen Destroyers. The B-side begins with a slower almost trippy jam, still fitting with the over-driven distorted sound persistent throughout the tape. (Chago) (self-released)

PECCADILLOES "10 Years... A Million Beers" 2 x CD Retrospective

This record came out in 2013. The first CD, *Rumor Control*, was recorded in 2005, and the second CD, *Chaos Show*, was recorded in 2009. It is now 2015, and I'm wondering: Does it count to release a ten year celebration album if you haven't recorded anything in the four years leading up to your decade celebration? Well, that's not really any of my business, so everybody just do what you want. This is standard female fronted bar punk from Las Vegas. Fast, snotty, and lacking anything of substance I could really get behind. There was no lyric sheet, so even if San D (the singer) did have anything to say worth noting, I couldn't make it out. What few lyrics I could understand in songs like "Psykill," "Minimum Rage," and "Flophouse Special" seemed about as meaningful as the very succinct thanks on the back of the album which, lest you forget, spans an entire DECADE of playing shows and meeting people: "Peccadilloes would like to thank all of our loyal fans and desert punks, our family and friends, and all the great bands we've shared the stage with." Wow, really sums it up, eh? *tears* I don't know why, but this album offends me, and not in the "*Whoa*, they don't care *whose* toes they step on!" kind of way, but more in the "*Wait*, you don't give a *shit* but you expect me to?" kind of way. The final ironic nail in the coffin for this release is SquidHat Records' motto, "Because Music Doesn't Have To Suck." You're right, SquidHat Records. So, tell me again why I'm holding this album? (JPool) (SquidHat)

THE PENETRATORS "She's the Kinda Girl" 7"

Ok, ok, I know this band has been around since the stone ages (ok, the '70s), but some things are best left in the past. Musically, it's boring and (at this point in time/music) predictable garage rock, and the title track goes on for about two minutes too long. "Take a Stand" is slightly more interesting—it could be a cover of a *London Calling*-era CLASH B-side—but once again the record left much to be desired. Lyrically, I don't even know where to begin. It's a mess. A stale and tired mess that is begging for relevance without enough self-realization to remember that even humans have to evolve in order to survive the test of time. Sorry, guys. (Sami Fink) (Slovenly)

THE PEOPLE'S WHISKEY "The People's Whiskey" CD

Interesting punk from Las Vegas. This record goes hard and weird, spanning a whole range of stuff—from straight ahead, fast punk rock, to blast beats, to ripping classic rock blazing solos, to straight country. Shit, even track 11, "Red Dress Actress" gets into some '90s era TOOL kinda regions. I'm not usually a fan of country twinged punk—it's just not my thing—but these guys do it really well. Great instrumentation and well written hooks that don't feel kitschy or clichéd. Both vocals are distinct from one another and don't share the same qualities you might expect from this kind of music. It kind of reminds me of HOT NEW MEXICANS, but I can't really tell you why. It seems like these guys probably party pretty hard, but manage to put an equal amount of energy into crafting good songs, which seems like a feat in and of itself living in a 24-hour party city. I've never played in Vegas, but now I wanna go there just to see if I can get a show with these guys. (JPool) (SquidHat)

PERSEKUTOR "Power Frost/The Twitching Hour" EP

This limited edition white vinyl Record Store Day release is the first release in seven years from this Romanian Black Metal band. Two songs, two sides—pretty straightforward 4/4 mid-tempo dark fare, with an emphasis on chord repetition and cavernous, dark-whispery vocals, making each song fairly catchy—which, now that I say that, is either good or bad, depending on your stance on Romanian Black Metal. Me? I'm an etchings and puns guy, and this record delivers on both fronts. All lyrics are written by Vlad the Inhaler, and the Twitching Hour, although admittedly stolen from REPULSION's Scott Carlson, was enough to get me on board. The "Power Frost" etching says "Feed goat, shear goat, milk goat, wait for goat to make a shit", and "The Twitching Hour" side says, simply, "Eventual slaughter goat." I like these songs, but I don't know that I'd send the download code to anyone I was trying to impress with my knowledge of heavy and obscure stuff. (JPool) (Magic Bullet)

PERVERSOR "Anticosmocrator" CD/LP

In the early '90s I embarked on a musical endeavor of conspiracy and intrigue. I made it my point to discover all of the loudest and most wicked bands on Earth at the expense of the BMG music catalog, without any regard for parental interference or fiscal retribution. With my Great BMG Catalog Ripoff of 1993, I swindled one of the biggest record of the month clubs of the time, and was treated to a library of music that would influence me for a lifetime. I ordered my first free 8 cassette tapes. *Appetite For Destruction* and *Psalm 69* being in that initial shipment. In the second batch, I recall *Countdown to Extinction* and *Pretty Hate Machine* arriving at my mailbox. It was the summer after 3rd grade—and my mind was being blown with every single delivery. In my third and final batch of cassettes which I would never pay for, I received a compilation album from Roughage Records. Purchased based on the promise of it being "evil" and offering a genre of music which I'd never heard but was sure that I would love: *"DEATH METAL."* Historically a rather unremarkable release, *The Heralds of Oblivion Vol 1.* (there would never be a Volume 2,) was unlike anything I'd ever heard. Bleak growling, which consistently made me think of zombies screaming as their eyes rolled in the back of their head. Drums which almost never took breaks and sounded much closer to jackhammers than any percussion I'd heard before. And the guitars were hardly more than a layer of noisy distortion whenever they weren't performing nonsensical solos. I wasn't sure what I was even listening to, or whether I even liked it, but I knew it was scaring the living shit out of me. I recalled thinking "This must be the music that murderers listen to." This proved to be Roughage's only release, and none of the bands involved went on to do anything remarkable thereafter. However, this introduction to death metal left a permanent groove in the synaptic firings between my ears and temporal lobe—and through the wonders of neuroplasticity I can sometimes hear a record that takes me back to that first wonder that my summer-long BMG scam allowed for me to experience. Perversor's *Anticosmocrator* takes me back to that haunt of fear, that wonder at sadistic blare. If you wish to hear some of the most perfect primitive metal, before there were distinctions between the thrashes, blacks, and deaths—when there was simply a metal whose only goal was to fuck up the minds of the youth, you would be best served picking up *Anticosmocrator. (*Ted Sweeney) (Hells Headbangers)

PILLOW FIGHT "Slumber Party" Download

Hell yeah! I'm jumping around my bedroom right now! If you don't like pop-punk, sugar coated with male and female vocals, then move along to the next review. Not to be confused with the Bay Area band from a few years ago, the PILLOW FIGHTS, this Galesburg, IL (up the middle of nowhere punx!) trio pours the sugar on thick to these songs about love, love letters, and $5 suggested door donations. If the twee jangle of PARK AVE. was crossbred with some New Jersey pop-punk ala FULL OF FANCY you'd get something very similar to this. Glad I moved back to Illinois so I can maybe see these folks in a sweaty, musky, overcrowded basement—you know, the proper way to enjoy jams like these. If I were Maddy Tight Pants I'd compare this to Lucky Charms. Highest honor! (Ray) (pillowfight.bandcamp.com)

PINK PILE "Pink Pile" CS

This is some rad shit. Somewhere between classic anarchopunk and New York no wave by way of Bay Area geekpunk. The lyrics are fucking genius. "Anarchist Cat" praises (condemns?!) cats for being inherently anarchist cause they do whatever they want. "People in Love" is so goddamn negative I can't help but love it. Also a song called "Girls With Snot"?! Fuck yes! These three ladies and dude all seem to be doing their own thing all at the same time, but keeping an ear open for the little touches each other make—it feels like it could fall apart at any moment, even though you know it probably won't. They also have one of the best rhythm sections of any Bay Area band going right now. Rough sounding tape that captures the tattered clothes/old dye job hair color feel of this band. If you have the chance to catch them live, do it. I also have noticed that one of their guitarists tape records every one of their sets—I hope that means a live compilation release is coming soon. Very recommended. (pinkpile.bandcamp.com)

PINK TOWER "Saline Ships" Download

I have to admit, I know these guys pretty well so I'll give you a bit of a back story. They currently hail from Minneapolis but for the past year or so they have been holed up in Ray, North Dakota, a town on the cusp of Bakken Oil, teaching and well... writing these songs. I was pleasantly surprised that the recordings were not the standard pop-punk fair of the guitarist's old band, FATHER SON AND HOLY SMOKES, but more rock and roll style jams mostly female vocals a la SONGS FOR MOMS. My favorite track is the fast garage-y "Bleeding on a Cotton", an almost HEADCOATEES-esque menstruation anthem. Normally, PINK TOWER preforms as an acoustic duo, but the addition of a full, plugged in band fills the sounds of these well-constructed pop songs. (Alex) (http://pinktower.bandcamp.com/releases)

PLANES MISTAKEN FOR STARS "Mercy (Reissue)" LP

This is a reissue of formidable record that came out in the mid-2000s. It still feels like it's that time. The record still sounds great, it's fucking heavy with excellent accents and driving parts. The record was the follow up to *Up In Them Guts*, which I thought was sludge filled descent into a band proving they can hang with mid-2000s emo and metal. Which is hard to do. This reissue steps up to the same place. (Francisco Ramirez) (Death Wish Inc.)

PLOW UNITED "Delco" EP

It took me a few listens to really get into the hang of this one, but it really grew on me. This is super catchy pop punk a la DILLINGER FOUR or OSKER with a little more emphasis on the pop than the punk. The song structures are poppy and catchy with lots of emphasis on choruses and some woahs thrown in for good measure. (Kevin Garvey) (It's Alive)

PLOW UNITED "Plow United" LP

A reissue of the bands 1994 debut. It's pretty obvious that this band had a somewhat lasting influenced on the New Jersey punk scene. This is some classic late '80s/early '90s sounding pop-punk. "Reason" sounds CRIMPSHRINE if they were, well, from New Jersey. You could definitely trace the lineage of this band to the ERGS! (especially after hearing the songs "Plow" and "You Are Here") and beyond. The original liner notes are reprinted,

including the letter the band received that forced them to change their name from PLOW to PLOW UNITED. How does this hold up 20 years later? Well, it's good, but not great. I'm sure if you're from the East Coast this reissue means a lot more to you than to a guy from Illinois. Nonetheless, a solid release. Pick it up if you wanna hear, what seems to be, a crucial piece of New Jersey pop-punk history. (Ray) (It's Alive)

POLYCHROME VIOLENCE "Polychrome Violence" EP

Even though I don't follow much mainstream music these days, the current trend of filtering every goddamn sound through pro-tools has really given me an appreciation for budget recordings. This sounds like it was recorded in a living room somewhere in the Midwest. I just checked and they're from K-zoo. I've still got it, baby! My friend Steve was over when I played this and he said it sounds like the snare is a trash can. If you live in Michigan and this band is playing an honest to god barn show, go check 'em out. They'll probably have a 30 rack of Busch Light and since its only two dudes, they'll probably give some of 'em away. (Nick Rouley) (Sloppy Pile)

POOL PARTY "Number One" LP

Do you like pop punk about partying with SLOPPY SECONDS-esque vocals? Simple 4/4 Ramonescore pop punk with immature lyrics. I knew these guys were from Florida before I even looked at the insert, and I'm sure they've played the Fest before. (Scott) (It's Alive/Mooster)

POOL PARTY "Born Too Loose" EP

As much as I like smoking the devil's lettuce, if I see a hand drawn bong on your album artwork, I'm 99% sure I'm not gonna like it and this was no exception. The vocals have a real Fat Wreck blah sound to them. If it was 1995, *Thrasher Magazine* would have used one of these garbage songs in their videos, and I would unfortunately learn the words as a result. This is music for guys that are going bald but still finger their girlfriends and brag about it. This band is also for fans of THE NOBODYS, which oddly enough is nobody. Stuck in the dollar bin. (Nick Rouley) (Sloppy Pile)

PREGNANCY SCARES "Mind Control" EP

I've been following this band since their demo came out. It was great, like if Tonie Joy decided to play in a blown out hardcore band. The first 7" was good, but didn't quite stand up to the demo. This one, though, is the top of the heap. High end, lo-fi recording. Plenty of distortion on everything. Frantic pace. It's basically everything I look for in hardcore. Best thing I heard this issue. (Dan Agacki) (Deranged)

PRIMITIVE CALCULATORS/ TORTURING NURSE split EP

A 50/50 split from Genjing Records, a young Beijing vinyl label. First up is PRIMITIVE CALCULATORS who, in the late 1970s, were the premiere Australian no-wave act. If this track is representative of their second-go, it's falling flat. Single-note distorto dance-punk that feels tired and cheap. Fortunately, The B-side is a whole different bag of bananas. "Midnight, the Stars, and You" is an old AL BOWLLY tune which Stanley Kubrick famously used to close and roll credits to his film *The Shining*. Earlier in the film "Midnight..." is also played at a party that Jack hallucinates in the Overlook Hotel's Gold Room. This is definitely one of my favorite scenes in movie history, where we see Jack truly unravel and fall completely off the wagon in front of Lloyd, the Overlook's ghost bartender. On the B-side, TORTURING NURSE co-opt the title of BOWLLY's tune, and throw up exactly what you'd guess: titanic second wave Japanoise. Along with peers GUILTY CONNECTOR and GOVERNMENT ALPHA, TORTURING NURSE are the absolute elite in this style pioneered by the likes of INCAPACITANTS, MERZBOW, and HIJOKAIDAN. "Midnight..." opens with a brief vocal episode of Dada grunting before they drop the business: an all signals in the red static attack. Absolute hell electronics composed of ebbing layers of crunch and squeal violently rip through most of the B-sides's six minutes, before a brief pause and a half-smirking sample of the original "Midnight..." to close things out just as Kubrick once did. Trust me when I say that you should pick this up, but pick it up for the Nurse's noise. Orders from the house. (Ted Sweeney) (Genjing)

PURE DISGUST "Chained" EP

Tuff'n'pissed oi-tinged hardcore. Being that they're from D.C. the IRON CROSS comparison seems inevitable, but perhaps not the most accurate. But still, this release sill feels in the legacy of the harDCore scene of the past. The song "Guilty" even plays around with MINOR THREAT'S "Guilty of Being White," changing up the political point with the re-worked "You're guilty because you're not white." It also has one of the sickest intros to a song I've heard in a long while. A lot of times bands like this end up with recordings that make me rather see them live than spin the record, but this record here captures some intensity and energy and I see myself coming back to it a lot in the near future. (Ray) (puredisgustdc.bandcamp.com/ Katorga Works/Quality Control)

THE RAYDIOS "Brand New Kid" EP

Lo-fi punk rock n roll done exceedingly well. They are legends and for good reason. Dirty melodic riffs, sick abrasive guitar leads, catchy choruses... These two songs are also so well crafted—the leading bridges and maybe an extra measure of build up from the pre-chorus back into the lead—it's the little things that put the RAYDIOS a step ahead of anyone trying to do something similar. This record is fucking awesome. (Jim) (Slovenly)

RAYDIOS "No Expectations" EP

You can't go wrong with any band Fink is in. TEENGENERATE was one of the best punk bands of the '90s, and FIRESTARTER was no slump either. This record keeps the punk in the garage with some IGGY/MC5 swagger and stomp. Big guitars, big sound. (Ray) (Secret Mission)

RED DONS with TV SMITH "A Vote for the Unknown" EP

For those who don't know TV Smith was the singer and primary songwriter for the ADVERTS. I had heard that JAY REATARD's band was supposed to do a US tour with TV SMITH before his untimely and stupid death. I was *really* excited for that. Perhaps that is how Portland's awesomely excellent RED DONS ended up playing with him, or maybe they would have any way... whatever. More importantly than my conjecture (is it though? You're gonna get my conjecture either way, so deal with it) is what this record sounds like. It sounds like mid tempo and classic punk. It seems slower than what I remember RED DONS sounding like previously, but it doesn't sound terribly different than their other output. I could also see TV SMITH having written these songs. I would know if my corporate overlords actually sent us records instead of free downloads. Only two songs on what I assume is a 7". This is definitely for fans of either the band or the man, but as a standalone I'm not overly impressed. (Apnea) (Deranged/Taken By Surprise)

THE RIZZOS "Worse Things" CS

Playing femme-fronted power pop with a bit of a grungy influence, the RIZZOS sound like a mix between WILD FLAG and Chicago's BOOTS. A lot of these songs seem to have slightly cliché love-centered lyrics, but they never get to the point of being corny. Although the vocals sound really good on songs like "Anything I Want You Too," the band seems to work best as a whole on heavier tracks like "Vomit Kiss" and "Blackout." A solid record overall, *Worse Things* is worth a listen just for the breaks of pedaled-out guitar feedback on the second track. (Clement Wink) (King Pizza)

ROOFTOPS "Please Let Me Come Home" Download

Sometimes when people talk about pop-punk I get confused. Cause I immediately think of stuff like SCREECHING WEASEL and the GROOVIE GHOULIES when a lot of times they mean SAVES THE DAY and SET YOUR GOALS. But I'm a '90s *MRR* moldy-oldie, so what the fuck do I know? Anyway, this definitely falls into the latter style of the genre. Punchy bass, crunchy guitars, that sing-y/ whiny/scream-y vocal style. Lot's of "lets-all-jump-up-and-down-together" parts. They should hook up with their fellow Aussies like AUSMUTEANTS and GENTLEMEN and realize that there's a bit more to punk these days than sounding like Warped Tour '02. (Ray) (rooftopsband.bandcamp.com)

RUSSIAN TSARLAG "Dipped in Gel" 2xCS

Eerie soul music soundtrack from a run-down motel. From fleas to beetles, just close your eyes and dream

a dark humorous hum of oceanic, depressed bliss. Don't forget your chemical sun-screen, plastic gloves, and hair net before you go to lay down on this lover's rock surrounded by an eternal tidal tempo of a deepest dark sea. I love it. Two top tracks are "Loose and Fresh" and "Northern Light" (Josh Vidal) (Wasp Video Roadhouse)

S.B.S.M. "Welcome to the Gay Hell" CS

Tension. Anger. Redirecting fear. Noise. Confrontation. Hunting the hunters. Music for warehouses and dark alleys. Makes songs like SUICIDE's "Frankie Teardrop" and THROBBING GRISTLE's "Discipline" look like old fashioned, chart hungry, classic dadrock. New sounds for a new post-straight white cisman world. (Ray) (secretsbysaltymistresses.bandcamp.com)

SATAN'S HOLLOW "The Horror" / "Satans Hollow" EP

Mostly solid 1982-83 style traditional Heavy Metal from the Windy City. This band seems to be centered around the "frozen in time" vocals of Mandy Martillo. Though this is not a slight—I mean she can sing like mad and annunciate rather well. Oddly, she has this PAT BENATAR style cadence to her phrasing. Yet at most times she sounds also reminiscent of Nicole Tafoya from Chicago's excellent speed metal act, ZNÖWHITE. The riffs on the A-side are tight, IRON MAIDEN-ish and easy as heck to follow. The B-side's riffs come off more NWOBHM meets JUDAS PRIEST with that bad ass, leather-fisted swagger. Interesting to note that Mandy's never been in a previous band and a few members have roots in acts like Mexican/U.S. death metal outfit the CHASM (and a variety of Chicago metal bands). In all, a very good first effort and now I'm curious if they named themselves after the video game from the '80s which is also featured in the gamersploitation film *Joysticks* (with Joe Don Baker). (Justin Davisson) (Swords and Chains)

SCALPED "Progress" EP

There's a lot to pissed about in San Francisco these days. SCALPED is a logical result. Tough, metal-tinged, hardcore. Sick gang vocals and perfect pit tempos. I'm not a huge fan of this style of music because I usually find it boring and same-y, but it's releases like this that remind how powerful this style of hardcore can still be. (Ray) (Video Disease)

SCAPHE "I (Me)" 7"

Heavy, psychedelic bass and drum hardcore with angry, dark lyrics. The A-side is one song that builds into a drony, dreamy cacophony. The B-side starts off with a powerviolence-y ripper, and as soon as you start to think this record is going to be fast, it deceives you. A single bass line runs through the rest of the record with another effect driven bass accompanying it, while the drummer does his own thing. Pretty different from SCAPHE's other releases, but for sure worth checking out. (Scott) (Insides Music)

SCAPHE "Long Way Down" LP

Saved this for last because there is a coincidental backstory to me reviewing this. I was actually supposed to release this very LP on my label, but when I heard the tracks I ended up backing out. Now, with that being said this is by no means a bad record. It was just a departure from all the previous SCAPHE material I have come to know and love up to this point (which was why I asked them let me release a record for them to begin with). Happy they got this out in the end, and again sorry dudes! So the review...first half of the record is classic sounding SCAPHE with a more progged out psychedelic element added to their signature bass and drum powerviolence, done with precision and with a knack for songwriting (think CYCLOPS, the progged out Eric Wood project from way back, but a little heavier... so, uh, MAN IS THE BASTARD I guess... tried to avoid that reference for the sake of not sounding cliché). Midwest's prog-PV weirdos do the sound very right, although they probably wouldn't even address that sound as their intent/focus. Towards the second half of the record things get weird and tracks pop up that sound like an entirely different band. One track sounds like an actual Dinosaur Jr song, no joke. Interesting approach, but it didn't work for me. Just felt disruptive to the entirety of the record and threw me for a loop. The oddball songs are fine for what they are but just seem like they don't belong and would be better off dumped onto a separate 7" or saved for a side project band. I want to hear SCAPHE do what they do best, which in my opinion is the prog-PV brutality they have established themselves with thus far. Solid jams otherwise. (R. Komen) (Insides)

THE SCHOOL "All I Want From You is Everything" EP

The SCHOOL hail from Cardiff, Wales. This band is very classic pop in their sound in that the group has seven members and they use everyone in the band to their advantage and build their own wall of sound. The vocals are very sweet and "All I Want From You" reminds me of something that would be in a '90s teen movie, something like the SOPHIE B. HAWKINS hit "As I Lay Me Down." There are two covers on here, one is a KNICKERS cover and the other is a CAROLE KING cover. They take a much darker turn on their CAROLE KING cover of "Crying In The Rain," which they do a great job on and make it a version on their own. (Denis) (Elefant)

SCHOOL DAMAGE "Break Up" EP

Can't go wrong with a song called "Butt Hurt." Or can you? These are all songs about... you guessed it... breaking up. Because, you know, that's all girls know how to write songs about (*insert sarcasm emoji here*). Synth parts be like... if a Casio keyboard was stuck on electric violin-symphony setting. Male/female vox trade off, like a poor (wo)man's VASELINES. I feel a little embarrassed listening to this. (gaybobz) (Detonic Recordings)

SHADOW AGE "Silaluk" EP

This whole post-punk/dark punk/goth revival is a few years old now and you'd think it'd be completely played out. Instead it seems like the trendies are falling to the wayside and picking up on other things while the people who were always genuinely into it are only getting more serious about it. Not just in production quality (which is top-notch here) but also in song writing. This band has members of LOST TRIBE, but sheds any of the more punk leanings that band has. The vocals are actually *sung* and don't follow the guitar or the standard templates used by punks singing in a different style but still trapped in punk thought. The stand out of this three song platter is "A Portrait of a Young Man Drowning." If you're still trapped in the darkness, light another candle and put this on. (Ray) (6131)

SKEPTICISM "ORDEAL" 2CD/2LP

For those unfamiliar with the super-subgenre of funeral doom, it's exactly what you'd guess it might sound like. Doom metal, played agonizingly slow (even by doom metal standards,) with often times exceedingly maudlin and morose themes (even by doom metal standards.) In short, funeral doom is fucking wallowing in it. And SKEPTICISM wallow better than practically anyone else in the genre. So you can imagine my thrill seeing new "Skepticism" turn up in the review pile. *Ordeal* is a live album, however it is not what we have come to expect from live albums: all the band's hit singles performed live at Wacken while we wait for them to wrap things up in the studio for their next actual album. But that is not what we have here. Instead, Skepticism have taken it upon themselves to record the entirety of their new release, featuring all new material, in a live setting. Ballsy. Yes. But does it work? Halfway through opener, *You,* which channels the slowest, most pained moments of MY DYING BRIDE, but played with the bombast of *Blood, Fire, Death*-era BATHORY; yes it absolutely is working. My only argument is that if one were to follow the album arc of SKEPTICISM, their production seems to become more and more bright with each album. Part of me does long for the abyssic dampness of the production found on SKEPTICISM's debut, *Stormcrowfleet.* But I'm glad they're taking chances. And not your typical chances—recording a double album live in front of an audience-types of chances. If special mention need be called out for any one part of this release, the track *Closing Music*—with its brobdingnagian pacing, doesn't feel epic in the classic sense of the word, but feels epic in a true Homerian way. Other highlights would be *The Road* which opens with the fastest riff in the Skepticism catalog (rips) and two bonus tracks—live renditions of classics *March and the Stream* and *Pouring.* Essential doom. (Ted Sweeney) (Svart)

SKEPTICS "Open Sea" 10"

I really, really liked this record. French garage punk that sounds like the illegitimate child of the WHITE STRIPES and FREAK VIBE—catchy and melodic, but leaving you with a

groove that is dirty and swampy as fuck. "TV Wizard" and "Open Sea" were two of my favorite tracks on an overall solid release, and either would make the perfect soundtrack to a night of drinking and poor decision-making in your favorite grimy dive bar. I sincerely hope this band makes it to the US to tour. (Sami Fink) (Frantic City)

SLOW WALKER "Slow Walker" LP

Rock'n'roll from Milwaukee, but wait, don't leave yet! It's clear that the time these guys *didn't* put into the packaging of their record, which is just a plain white cardboard sleeve with a pretty standard font/band picture on the front and a quick bit of information on the back, they put into the actual music on the record itself, which is refreshing. Interesting takes on basic 4/4 major scale rock hooks with some pretty sick guitar riffs to pull the songs along when (or *if*) they start to drag. Catchy, almost drone-y vocal melodies that I'm gonna be fucking bummed about when they won't exit my skull once I take this record off the turntable. The last song on A-side, "Bathroom Tile" has some great bass/guitar solos that are worth a listen on their own. Put these guys on a bill with MEAT WAVE and you've got yourself a show, there, buddy. (JPool) (Stale Heat)

SLUGGA "Parasite" 7"

Fuck, straight from the get go this two song 7" by these mutants from Atlanta kicks you straight in the gut. The A-side, "Parasite" is the highlight of the 3:06 total track time of this whole release. These guys aren't creating anything new with their version of straight forward punk/hardcore but they dialed in the sound perfect. There's a nice distorted crunch to the snottiness of the singer's voice that works perfectly with the rest of the pretty raw recording. With only two songs on this ripper, it's hard not to put it on repeat. (Nicolai) (Total Punk)

THE SPLITS "II" LP

The darkness that this second LP by the SPLITS conveys, may have as much to do with breakups as it does to the short sunlight hours Helsinki has during the winter. Some of the best music comes from being locked inside during dark winter days. Whether or not these songs were written in the winter, the nod to other cold climate bands run through this post-punk, garage rock record. The first two songs on this nine song LP hit me the most but when the band slows down the pace they lose a bit of their groove. "End is Near" might be the highlight of the whole record with its great guitar lead that almost sounds like a straight lift from the WIPERS. I must admit this album is a grower. At first I pretty much shrugged it off but over time it quickly began to furrow into my brain, wanting me to listen to it more and more. (Nicolai) (Dirtnap)

STARING PROBLEM "Long Winter" CS

Chicago's post-punk band that just keeps on going. Five years after putting out their cassette debut, and four years after their first 7" (and who knows how many bassists in between) Staring Problem finally comes back with six new songs. The opener "Don't Tell A Soul" is a killer danceable track that I can see being played at many a modern goth/post-punk DJ night. The familiar motifs of highly personal, but still mysteriously shrouded, lyrics sung with Lauren's dreamy, yet dry vocals and backed by Alix's human drum machine playing are still there—but the addition of synth/keys to the band has really filled out their sound and added a texture and atmosphere that they were always just shy of grasping. I can make the easy comparisons to all the goth/post-punk 101 bands, but this is better than all of that. You can tell the band also digs the other side of British post-punk too, the less black draped and more twee and shambly, like YOUNG MARBLE GIANTS, HEAVENLY, TV PERSONALITIES, ANOTHER SUNNY DAY. Get this! (Ray) (BLVD)

STORM "Demo '82" 10"

Three incredible songs of this early hard rock/proto-heavy metal band from Trondheim, Norway. Some prog inspirations without getting *too fancy* while still maintaining 100% of the heaviness. Like their neighbors in Sweden there's a pretty strong RAINBOW/UFO influence. Though, the opener "Nightmare" brought back memories of UK metal/prog act, DEMON circa their "Helluva Night." "The Axeman" is a very muscular HM tune. It uses a very nice Ritchie Blackmore-style riff with histrionic and quite passionate vocals ala Phil Mogg. Plus, there's a neat "news report' break in the middle of the song about an "axeman on the loose." I'd love to hear this back-to-back with AMEBIX's same-named tune. "Stranger" is a touch ballad-y but also maintains a trippy horror vibe—wouldn't be far off from an outtake from RAINBOW's *Rising* or an early ACCEPT album. There's a great write up on the Heavy Metal Rarites forum on the band history. Keep in mind Norway had a small but *very* potent Heavy Metal scene in the '80s (BLACK ANGELS, NEON NIGHT, MANITOU, HARDLINE and *ahem* TNT, the latter of which the band has connections to). Also, *don't* confuse this STORM with any shitty black/folk metal acts of the same name. (Justin Davisson) (Serpent's Nest)

STRUTTER "Demo 2015" Download

Frantic punk at hardcore tempos. The lead guitar sounds awesome (is that chorus? Flange?) and rips and the vocals sound amazing (always a plus when people laugh maniacally in songs). Quick and to the point review for a quick and to the point release. Features members of IMPALERS and GLUE, if that matters to you at all. (Ray) (strutter.bandcamp.com)

SURROUNDED BY THIEVES CD

Pretty straightforward stuff here; uptempo, melodic, Warped Tour-style pop punk in the vein of PENNYWISE or NOFX but with more guitar solos and leads. I listen to plenty of stuff like this just out of nostalgia. I feel like I would probably listen to a record like this, get drunk & sing along with high school friends, then get a t-shirt for my little brother; however, I didn't listen to this record in high school, and I don't actually have a little brother. (Kevin Garvey) (Squid Hat)

TAPE REC "Death Friends" LP

Awesome guitar pop happening here. Been awhile since I've heard that "washed out" kind of sound in rock music that I've actually liked. A lot of fuzz on the guitars and an occasional freak out but still pumping out the hooks and keeping it *super* poppy. The vocals have this beautiful effect that I haven't heard since ELLIOT SMITH, though I can't understand the lyrics. Maybe reminds me of the OVENS in a way as well? This sweet release will definitely be a cool edition to your lo-fi rock mixtape with TIMES NEW VIKING and GUIDED BY VOICES. (Chris Case) (IFB)

TERRIBLE FEELINGS "Tremors" LP

Power pop with impassioned vocals, reminiscent of PAT BENATAR, with a whole lot of delay. Yep, they are Swedish. Demons, vultures and darkness are the lyrical themes. Kinda like a punk MEATLOAF or a heavier BIG DIPPER. I can get behind WIPERS worship, and the musicianship is strong, but my feelings about this are less than terrible, more just *meh.* (gaybobz) (Deranged)

THROAAT "Black Speed" CD

There is something pure about a band titling their album with such nominal accuracy as "Black Speed" and ending the record with a VENOM cover. With that information alone, you might already know whether or not you want to pick up this record. For those of you still on the fence, get out your shovel: let's dig into this. *Black Speed* is inherently a heavy metal affair for most purposes, specifically thrashy metal with some NOWBHM tendencies, but distinctly black metal pronounced DARKTHONE-ian vocals keeping things evil. However, this isn't something I'd be comfortable lumping in with "black thrash" bands, as there does not seem to be much of an attempt to meld the two genres—and in practice these riffs harken back to JUDAS PRIEST before SARCOFAGO. And don't you worry—you have all of the obligatory Tom G. Warrior-styled "Unngh!" before air raids sound and solos are dive-bombed into. However, THROAAT truly shine when they break it all down, check their badass quotient at the door (because let's face it—they've met it tenfold,) and lay you out with a riff that flirts with balladeering to the point where your only option is to slow bang and hold your beer on high in salute, best evidenced in the titanic bridge of the album's second track, "Coven." With *Black Speed* THROAAT have displayed an entirely heavy metal affair, with enough black / punk reference points for you to feel adequately grim or underground or kvlt or whatever the hell you elitists need to feel validated. (Ted Sweeney) (Invictus Productions)

THROAT "Short Circuit" 12"

Finland's gut wrenching noise rock band. These guys cross between sounding like HAMMERHEAD and the COWS. So if you are into Am Rep sound and like some great textures to your music. Check out THROAT. This 12" is simply great! (Francisco Ramirez) (Reptilian)

TOTAL ABUSE "Looking For Love" EP

Same old TOTAL ABUSE. Have always liked this band. Psychotic heavy noisy hardcore. Title track is a plodder. FLIPPER is a good reference point, or BLACK FLAG without an idiot singer. May as well just be smashing the guitar on the ground. The recording is top notch for this style. "Beg" is more my fucking tempo with a cool hook at the end. "Bootlicker" is the noisiest jam of the bunch, but not so much that it doesn't have a discernible riff. All around great one guys. (Apnea) (Deranged)

TRAMPOLINE TEAM "Velveteen Dream" EP

I have seen this band a few times and they are great live. I own their first 7" too, so I had an idea what to expect from this. It's even better than the first one. This is catchy, fast, garage punk. The first song starts off like LOLI AND THE CHONES, but TRAMP TEAM is not focused only on hating you, and while aforementioned simple description fits for all the songs, they do have enough variety in the chord changes and hooks that this doesn't let down. Creative backup vocals on "Make it Faster" and "Change Your Name" are a good example. The solo in "Change Your Name" is cool as hell, too. Having a chorus of "6-6-6" on a song will never be a minus in this reviewer's opinion. Highly recommend this. Favorite recording for me in this review cycle. (Apnea) (Pelican Pow Wow)

TRANCE "Malidicion" 12"

This is what I'm talking about when I say that Iberia is killing it. These punks from Mallorca, Spain are somewhere between classic Lookout! Records and some crazy SILLA ELECTRICA shit. The song "No Tienies Derecho A Llevar Una Camiseta De Ramones" is something that many Chuck Taylored, leather jacketed punks should remember. Hooks galore, catchy as fuck songs, killer vocals. This record sounds like it could have come out in any decade since Dee Dee first shouted "1-2-3-4!" Proof you don't have to do something new to do something right. Get this! (Ray) (Metadona/Solo Para Punks)

THE TURKLETONS "Fur Frontal" 7"

This is pretty straightforward adolescent pop-punk by some folks who were probably born in the '70s. The song titles will give you a pretty good idea of what we're dealing with here... on the first side, a nice *Strange Brew* reference, "Take Off You Hoser," and "You Had Me At Fuck Off Needle Dick." This kind of thing is pretty timeless. I think this counts as "Ramonescore," but whereas the RAMONES had, at times, traumatizing depth of emotion, this is stunted near-non-expression. (Jim) (It's Alive / Rad Girlfriend)

UFUX "Demo" CS

Put down this zine and go get this right now. Seriously. Drop this stupid rag and pick up these tunes. No, for real. *Hurry the fuck up!* (Ray) (ufux1.bandcamp.com)

USELESS EATERS "SINGLES 2011-2014" LP

This collection is a mix of out of print jams that is mainly front man, Seth Sutton's project. USELESS EATERS jams are short, distorted and catchy. Since this collection is a mix of songs throughout the years, the ones that stand out for me are the ones with the futuristic songs with catchy drum machine beats. "Addicted To The Blade" is a super catchy song that I can totally see myself having a one person dance party to. USELESS EATERS are a San Francisco band via Memphis and at one point had JAY REATARD filling in on bass. Some of the songs on here have similar fuzzed out melodies reminiscent of JAY REATARD, but not too much. (Denis) (Slovenly)

V/A "5 Way Orgasm of Death" LP

Crushing abrasive noise compilation from WAVES CRASHING PIANO CHORDS, ROSY PALMS, SHALLOW BIBLE, SUNKEN CREEK, and FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE. Although it contains five bands, there isn't a remarkable difference in the sound. This record is heavy on the feedback, dark indiscernible samples and over-driven distorted tones we've come to associate with harsh-noise. (Chago) (Continuum)

V/A - GC RECORDS 15 YEAR ANNIVERSARY RECORD/ZINE "Compilation" LP

Shahab Zargari's introduction to this 12 band compilation LP with accompanying zine says, "There is no Side A. No Side B. Rather, you have Lightning side, which encompasses all things traditionally GC and then you have the Cloud Side, which introduces you to Yum Yum Vinyl Records. The Lightning side is punk rock in the purest form. The Cloud side is the new face of Vegas Music." This is a very well put together release—nice marbled blue vinyl, and a slick full color 38 page zine highlighting all the artists present on the record, as well as a history of Geykido Comet records and a vision of what Yum Yum Records aims for, which is "to release material by bands that don't fit within the GC Records roster." The Lightning side is full of that west coast, desert-fried punk rock that recalls (for me, anyway) watching local bands on the tiny Vans Stage at Warped Tour circa '99 in the burning midday sun while waiting for NOFX to hit the stage at 7 p.m., and being too stoned to ask Roger from LESS THAN JAKE to smoke weed with me. Fast, aggressive shaved head kind of punk. Y'know, like PENNYWISE and ZEKE, that kinda thing. It's probably not a coincidence, then, that this label was formed in 1999, because the punk bands on this record seem to be stunted into that bygone era (bygone for me, anyway) of 'bro' punk. The Cloud side, however, has some really interesting bands. SHAYNA RAIN & THE GENTS' "Aiming for the Sun" was a particular standout. Most of the stuff on this side could be classified as almost alt-country or just plain alternative. There's also a bumpin' ass (if not wholly ridiculous and silly) EDM track by BOIIS called "Hot Damn." This record is definitely all over the place, but that was by design. Seems to me that Shahab's musical tastes have slowly trended away from punk rock since 1999, which is fine, but it's clear that GC Records may not hold as much interest for him as it once did, because, while the Lightning side of this record feels well-heeled and worn out, the Cloud side has some really eclectic sounds that *feel* more like punk rock in its purest form, even if none of the bands on this side would ever be classified as "punk." (JPool) (GC/Yum Yum Vinyl)

V/A "Normalised: the Detonic Collection" LP

Bring your umbrella—this compilation of international bands is suitable for a goth dance party in your local sewer tunnel or day drinking at the graveyard. There's a broad range of styles here, from synth pop and krautrock to noise. Some of these songs would make my baby cry (DEAD BOOMERS I'm looking at you). My favorites are the dance-y ones that border on making fun of themselves (WE ARE ENFANT TERRIBLE, TRIPPPLE NIPPPLES). Some weird shit and I like it. (gaybobz) (Detonic Recordings)

V/A - RED SCARE INDUSTRIES "10 Years of Your Dumb Bullshit" LP

Definitely put this off until last. I really don't want to be listening to this. I must have been mixing up Red Scare Industries with a screamo band THE RED SCARE from bitd. As soon as I opened the folder and saw the LILLINGTONS are the first band on here I got really pissed off. The other names I recognize on here are also pissing me off. Like in about 15 minutes I'm gonna have to listen to a TEENAGE BOTTLEROCKET song. *Ugggh...* Ok, so you can surmise this is not my cup of tea and I play in a pop punk band for fuck's sake. These bands are all very professional and the production is consistently good from track to track. That's exactly part of the problem for me though. Sounds overproduced, feels overproduced. Boring lyric themes that are maybe supposed to be funny but are just stupid. Boring as fuck riffs are boundless. This is a place as good as any to complain about MASKED INTRUDER as well. The stalker shtick is rape-y and you should know that. You guys write decent songs, but that theme is downright fucking stupid. Maybe the best song on this CD and it's just ruined by the theme. Appreciated the COBRA SKULLS song. I rip on DIRECT HIT! A bunch, too, but their song isn't that bad either. Unfortunately that just means fucking TEENAGE BOTTLEROCKET is next. I might have to just skip it. Seriously, it's so bad. ELWAY is kinda standing out as being more moody and

emo. I thought they got sued for that name though... I'm just gonna end this review. It's mostly bland pop punk. If you like that style, you probably already knew about this label and most of these bands. Considering I've heard of most of them and I hate this shit, I'd assume you know exactly what you're getting when you consider purchasing a 10 year label retrospective. Lastly, the DRUGLORDS OF THE AVENUES song wins. That's a punk song you bozos. (Apnea) (Red Scare Industries)

V/A "Tunes from the Toilet Vol. 1"
V/A "Tunes from the Toilet Vol. 2"

Mostly grindcore and noisecore, some power electronics/noise as well. *Volume 1* has 55 bands on it and *Volume 2* has 57, all bands being exactly what you'd expect from this label based on prior reviews above... dollar bin brutality! There is a band on one of these called COLOSTOMY BAGUETTE and also another called KOLOSTOMY BAG only a few tracks after, on the same comp, if that is any indication as to what you are getting yourself into. I was mostly impressed that all these tracks fit onto a single 7." Remember *Blleeeeeaaauuurrrrgghhh!* comps? Yeah, think of that but for noisecore/lo-fi grind freaks. Notables: TOTAL HIPSTER CRUSHER, DISLEKSIK, VICTIM OF CIRCUMSTANCE, SISSY SPACEK, SUNKEN CHEEK, WATER TORTURE, SORDO, SWALLOWING BILE. (R. Komen) (Continuum)

V/A "Turist i Tillvaron Vol. 8" LP

A mixed bag comp of bands from all around Sweden. Some highlights include the speedy and direct hardcore of MOTVILJA who remind me a bit of another Svensk band, INTENSITY. The, uh, intense crust of IILANDSPROBLEM that just rips like a primo Sverige-dodsmetal track but with, of course, *way* better vocals. IDIOT IKON is somewhat in the similar mold with a severe guitar tone. The traditional yet modern sounding punk of Stockholm band, MATIAKATET whose sound is reminding me of a Svensk version of SLANT 6 with some great lead and backing vocals. The furious ladies and men of HELLRE VARGEN is rather good as well with some gnarly and quite pissed hardcore (though I've heard other stuff from them and it's more melodic). Same goes for the ace, granted there's a few duds one here—from the doofy "folk punk/drunk punk" combo of the JUDAS BUNCH who might not have sounded much better in Swedish instead of this being in English. Comes with a big 'ol booklet (or in this case, a PDF) of all of the bands. In all a pretty good look at what's happening in the middle finger of the Nordic nations. (Justin Davisson) (Turist i Tillvaron)

THE VERMIN "Must Die" CD

Standard punk and when I say standard, I mean the truly standard punk... think a Chevy Bel Air matte black paint job with dark purple spider web interior, driven by a dude with Cowhide Creepers, leather jacket, a Fedora, tatted up, and much like A Chevy Bel Air it just cruises. Think of old DESCENDENTS meets the NOBODYS and a bit of GEORGE THOROGOOD. However, the music never really takes off. It's primarily mid tempo until the 13th track, "She's Tragic" That starts with a sexually charged female voice saying, "Hi, I'm an enormous slut." Then it finally gets some speed but most of the record stays the same speed. I'm certain it's an anthology of their work because its 26 tracks, and the cover has the band and hard riding badasses, and lady badasses standing around a tombstone that says "The VERMIN 1995-2015. "That's 20 years for the ninny at home reading this trying to do the math in his stoned mind while also coming to the realization that they finally found David Spade funny!! So yeah, they broke up this year!!! The album is incredibly anthemic with ample production that ranges from: movie quotes, saxophones, and sound effects. So it at least attempts to keep you enthralled, and if that doesn't get you perhaps you will enjoy the sophomoric lyrical content. That might come off as a bash, but in reality it has its place. Especially in punk, a format for everyone not just the intellectual elite who in many ways have hijacked punk and tried to make it something else--i.e. LEMURIA the FLEETWOOD MAC of punk --and to be honest FLEETWOOD MAC and punk shouldn't mix! It's like Mountain Dew and an overweight 60 year old diabetic, it does more harm than good! So if you're into some throwback shit that doesn't force you to think or eat vegan pizza. This could be for you! (Ben Eads) (SquidHat)

THE VISITORS "Yeti" LP

This record is so goddamn cute. The art and music are equally cartoony. There's a yeti drinking a cocktail and reading the news by the fireplace on the insert for chrissakes. It's late '90s bubble-gum-pop-punk through and through. Honestly, I'm kind of amazed that this exists in 2015. It's a light-hearted and fun record you might want to listen to as you teach your kids how to pogo. I feel like I'm living on a different planet than these people, and their planet is better than mine. (Jim) (It's Alive)

VOIGHT-KAMPFF "Last House on the Right" EP

I remember hearing this band before, and I swear it was more of a WIPERS/NO HOPE FOR THE KIDS styled band. I guess that's not worlds away from reality, but still feels short of the present sound. Maybe a darker, less dance-y, more post-punk version of MERCHANDISE? Highly recommended. (Dan Agacki) (Deranged)

THE VOMIT ARSONIST "Only Red" CD

Providence, Rhode Island industrial behemoth THE VOMIT ARSONIST (née Andrew Grant) has crafted a completely bleak album with *Only Red*. Now please accept my apology for using what is simply one of the most exhausted adjectives in the canon of music critique, and allow me to work towards an empirical definition of the bleak and *Only Red*. If we jump back to LEAUTREAMONT's *Maldoror* we will find it often described as bleak, however the wildly colorful proto-surrealist imagery is simply too floral for me to accept bleak as an appropriate descriptor. JOY DIVISION's *Closer*, similarly defined inexactly, because, well let's face it; it's too goddamn fun dancing to for a categorically bleak recording. The bleak must have an enduring, inescapable component to it. So what is bleak then? Antarctica: cold and hostile in every direction for as far as you can imagine, fits my definition of the bleak. My not quite ready for production remake of *Groundhog Day*, in which I've cast Viggo Mortensen in the role of Murray's Phil Connors, would be appropriately described as bleak. And in this sense, *Only Red* is a truly bleak record that is essentially a single enduring meditation of personal dissatisfaction moreso than a collection of songs. The formula consists of super thick synth beds with a generous amount of distortion and reverb, a lone kick drum carrying on at an ominous pace, and strained vocals processed to inhuman extremes—and for the entirety of the record Grant refuses to stray from this pattern. To answer your question, no I will not find myself returning to this record often—I have already defined those harrowing power electronics records that I need in my life, and I really can't imagine introducing any others at this point. Nonetheless, it would be misguided to say that this record is anything but clearly defined, masterfully executed, and yes; bleak. (Ted Sweeney) (Malignant)

WAXY TOMB "INFRA-SHAPE" CS

Post-human voices floating through modular, amorphous planes that sonically intermingle and transform under this aural microscope. Microbial songs grow naturally with an acutely curved beauty that asks for many listens as layers unfold new species and terrains. The future or an alien past—either way this exists now, so get your virtual pawclaws on this very well thought out sound structure before it disintegrates into ectoplasmic stardust. Great art/great tape. (Josh Vidal) (weirdear.com)

WE/OURS "Demo"

Atomospheric indie-rock that comes out of the '90s post-hardcore/emo vein with some echo-y shoegaze vibes to it as well. Reminds me of stuff I would hear in dorms at Midwest college towns back in the day—and that's not even me being snarky. They're from Minneapolis, for chrissakes! Soaring guitars flying over earnest vocals. Think the lazy Sunday feel of those certain MINERAL, ELLIOT, CHRISTIE FRONT DRIVE and JEJUNE songs. If any of those bands strike your fancy, or bring back waves of nostalgia, you could do a lot worse than download this demo. I keep coming back to this, over and over. Can't wait to hear more from these folks! (Ray) (weours.bandcamp.com)

WEAK TEETH "So You've Ruined Your Life" LP

This is a great fast and melodic D-beat/emoviolence hybrid. Scream-y

vocals, dissonant guitars, political lyrics, and unconventional song structures reminiscent of what would happen if FROM ASHES RISE listened to a lot of SAETIA. I'm really digging this. (Kevin Garvey) (Riotous Outburst)

WILD BALBINA "Sisters Before Misters" CD

I immediately like this, poppy, catchy melodies with dreamy fuzzy guitars and shoe-gazey leads. Strong female vocals swimming through an ocean of reverb, with a super dreamy beach pop vibe. WILD BALBINA hails from Spain, and it totally makes sense that Elefant, home to the extraordinary PRIMITIVES, would be the label putting this out. This album feels like an easy bike ride through some like soft green colored landscapes on a breezy warm day. (Danny B.) (Elefant)

WILD RACCOON "Mount Break" CS

With a one-man-band garage outfit the BBQ reference is unavoidable. Fuzz, treble and reverb. Stomping minimalist drumming. He's French, but he sings in English. Super catchy songs—one gloriously called, "Fuck Fuck the Bankers." Hell yeah. I can get behind that. He gets pretty dang heavy and psyched out at times. Also, a pretty sick rendition of one my favorite DANIEL JOHNSTON songs, "True Love Will Find You In the End." (Jim) (Howlin Banana)

WILDHONEY "Sleep Through It" LP

I think this style music is often referred to as dream pop. It's an apt subgenre title. Jangly, reverbed out, sweetly sung mid tempo jams all day. It all kind of blurs together for me. Then right as I typed this sentence the song "Maybe You're Crazy" comes on and rocks harder than every song before it. But overall I would still consider this pretty light listening. I'm not well versed in this subgenre to compare it to any other bands really... SUPERDRAG? Let's just say it's catchy as hell rock music, with excellently sung vocals and enough hooks to keep you listening. (Apnea) (Deranged/Forward)

WILFUL BOYS "Anybody There?" EP

Angst-ridden rock that is very punk influenced, but not quite punk. Solid drumming with lots of toms and guitar tones evocative of BLACK SABBATH. It's kind of a cop out, but the easiest way to describe this is to say that it sounds like the JESUS LIZARD. (Kevin Garvey) (Ever/Never)

WINGTIPS "Ultravision" CD

Full disclosure, I've met the person who wrote and recorded this entire album. I don't know him that well, but he also plays guitar and keyboards in another one of my favorite bands; AUTONOMY. What I didn't know was just how damn talented this kid is. I can't wait for the day that Vinny gets his hands on enough money to get into a proper studio or record with better gear. This album is full of gems. This is like a low fi version or demo tapes of TEARS FOR FEARS, early PET SHOP BOYS and TALK TALK. Yes I know what you are thinking, here we go, yet another band with feet in both the Punk scene and the '80s darkwave, post punk thing. But here is the twist; while most of the bands doing that at the moment are trying to sound dark or minimal, this band is unabashedly pop as all hell and gives two fucks about it. It's very refreshing. If you come here trying to listen to some lost early OMD tracks a la COLD CAVE. Forget about it. This is VINCE CLARK reincarnated as a 20 something year old punk transplant from the southern boonies of Illinois to Chicago. How this kid got to know this type of music out in the middle of nowhere is beyond me (stupid me, the internet, damn I'm old) but you need to go listen to this if you are a fan of '80s new wave. This would have been in every John Hughes '80s movie 30 years ago. This has not left my CD player for weeks. I can't wait to hear this on vinyl. (Benny) (wingtips.bandcamp.com)

WOKLING "Demo '14"

Alex Bean has become one of my new favorite singers. Her vocals and lyrics alone would make me love this demo, but thankfully the right tight hardcore compliments her scream-y, talky voice just perfectly. Also, I love that all the song titles are one word. It definitely fits with the explosive brevity of the music. "Fontanelle" has really amazing start/stop part that I just can't get over. Providence is damn lucky to have a band like this in their backyard. (Ray) (Lagerville)

WOLF BLOOD "Wolf Blood" Download

Some fine doom metal here. Riffs on riffs on riffs. It's got a heavy '70s vibe, but doesn't play itself out to be "retro." If I knew a little more about modern bands that play this, I'd throw out some comparisons, but I don't cause I think that most of them that try to do this fail completely. WOLF BLOOD actually can keep my interest for four plus minutes of instrumental shredding riffage. The male/female vocals are also good—you don't (well, at least *I* don't) hear many ladies singing in this style and it's nice to hear someone do it and *kill* it. (Ray) (wolfblood666.bandcamp.com)

YANG FAN "What Happened After 1,001 Nights" LP

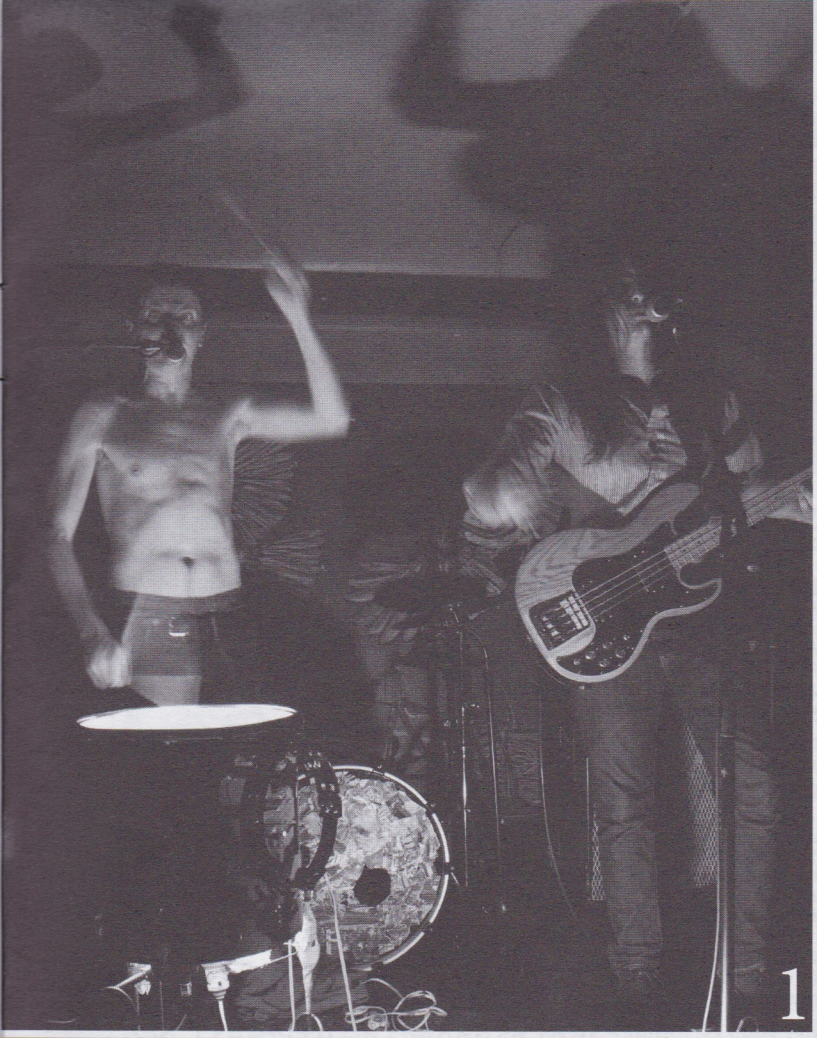
If I were to compose a promotional sticker to attach to this release, it would obnoxiously tout *What Happened After 1,001 Nights* as "Morriconian without any musical proficiency, chit-chat similar to the collaborations of ZEENA PARKINS and IKUE MORI, but with more of a kinship to Finnish what-the-fuckfolk bands than anything out of the New York improv community." And I'd only be lying a little. Now let me explain myself. First things first, it's a playful record. But playful is oft-confused with "light", and this release is anything but. Yang Fan's idea of playful is closer to Terrence McKenna's elves at play. "But what is astonishing and immediately riveting is that in this place there are entities—there are these things, which I call 'self-transforming machine elves', and the objects that they make have the peculiar ability to themselves generate this linguistic 'stuff' which condenses as other objects. So beings are making objects, showing you objects, the objects are turning into beings and making other objects, these beings and objects, they jump into your chest—and then they jump back out. They jump into your body and disappear into your body, and then they jump back out, waving these things, just throwing this stuff in all directions. They are—the word that comes to mind is "*zany*." It's like a Bugs Bunny cartoon, uh... gone mad. And all of this energy—they are elves. This is what elves are. It's this weird thing, where they love you—or they like you a lot, but you can tell that their sense of humor is *weird*. And that you must be very careful of the deals you cut with these things and, in fact, I've spent so much time trying to understand what is this. It has different kinds of feelings about it. One is (and this really threw me for a loop when I figured this out) after many many of these trips, and analyzing this place I kept going to, I finally realized: this place is... somebody very weird... it's their idea of a reassuring environment for a human being! It's like a playpen. It's this warm, well-lit, secure, womblike environment, and when I break into it these things, the elves and the toys, are toys! These are things to amuse me. The way you would hang, uh, cubes and blocks above a cradle or a playpen, you know? Because children are supposed to coordinate shapes and bright colors. That's what these things are: they are toys to try and get me to coordinate my perception in this place. It's a holding area of some sort—someone's created this and is watching me." So really, if you like shimmering digital delay glitches on top of field recordings, and/or transdimensionally heavy drugs—pick this up. (Ted Sweeney) (Genjing)

ZEX "Fight For Yourself" CD

I'll be completely honest and admit that I saw a cheesy ass all hell video this band put out before this CD landed in my hands for review. I tried very hard to put that video out of my head and give this a fair listen. I did. Normally I'd be all over this type of music. I love the early UK 82 sound. But something is lacking here. The *Wanderlust* 7" worked as a single, I enjoyed it, but a whole LP is not convincing me. Vocals are tight and spot on. It's just that the songs go from almost NWOBHM era to straight up pop punk a la BLONDIE and it doesn't work for me. I get it, you guys are punk, studs and cool looking charged hair (the band does look cool as hell) and want to lay down your roots. You all love Punk, all kinds of Punk, metal and rock and roll. You rock VENOM and IRON MAIDEN patches next to a MODERN LOVERS patch on your denim vest. However, that denim vest is not translating well onto a record. (Benny) (Magic Bullet)

PHOTOS//PATRICK HOUDEK

1: THE COPYRIGHTS
2: NERVOUS PASSENGER
3: MULTIPLE TRUTHS
4: THE BROKEDOWNS
5: DRILLING FOR BLASTING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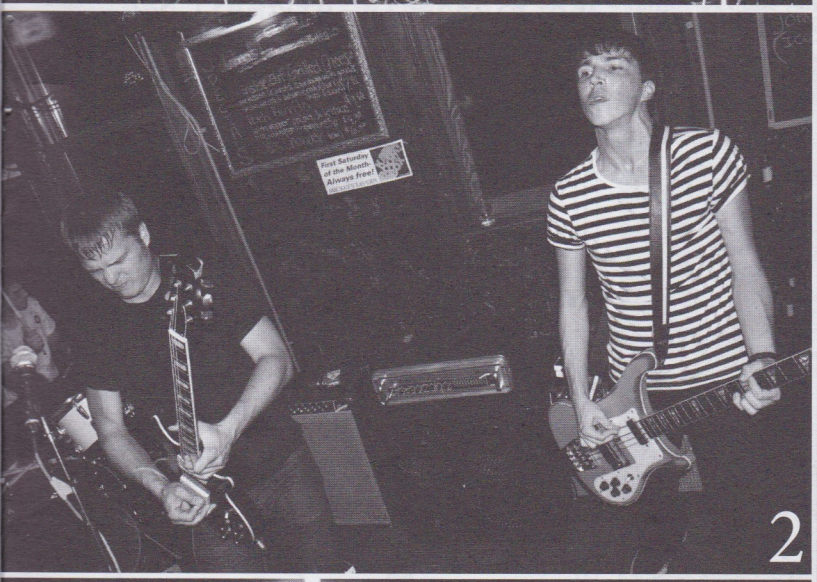
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PHOTOS//ANDY JUNK

1: ED SCHRADER'S MUSIC BEAT
2: BAD SPORTS
3: THE DICKIES
4: BLACK RAINBOW
5: PIN PRICK PUNISHMENT
6: TENEMENT

5

6

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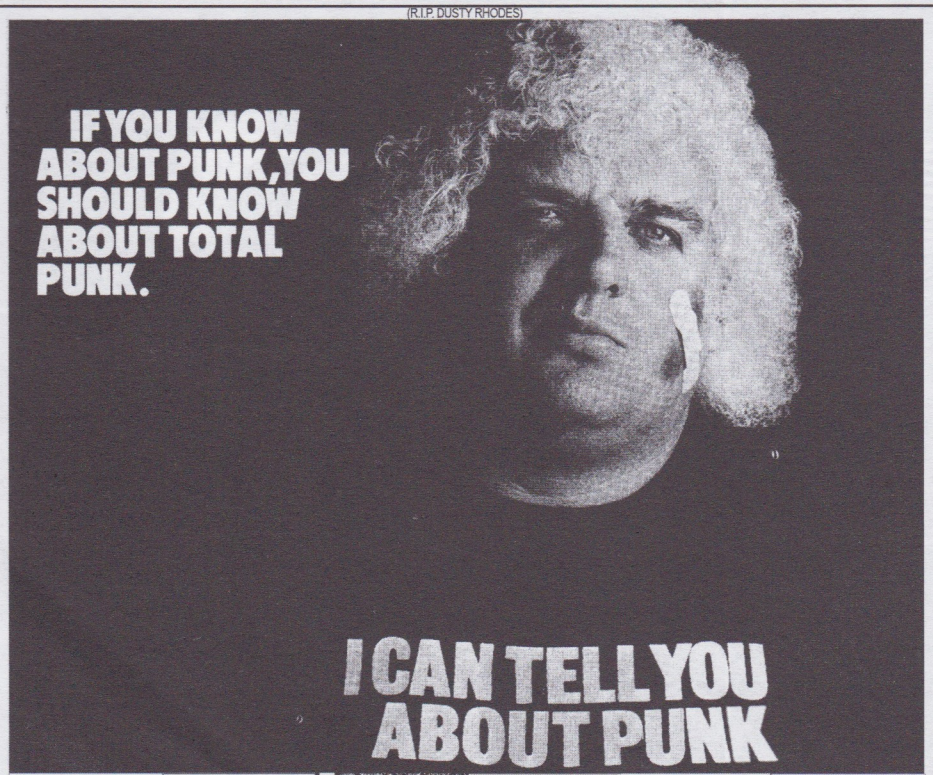

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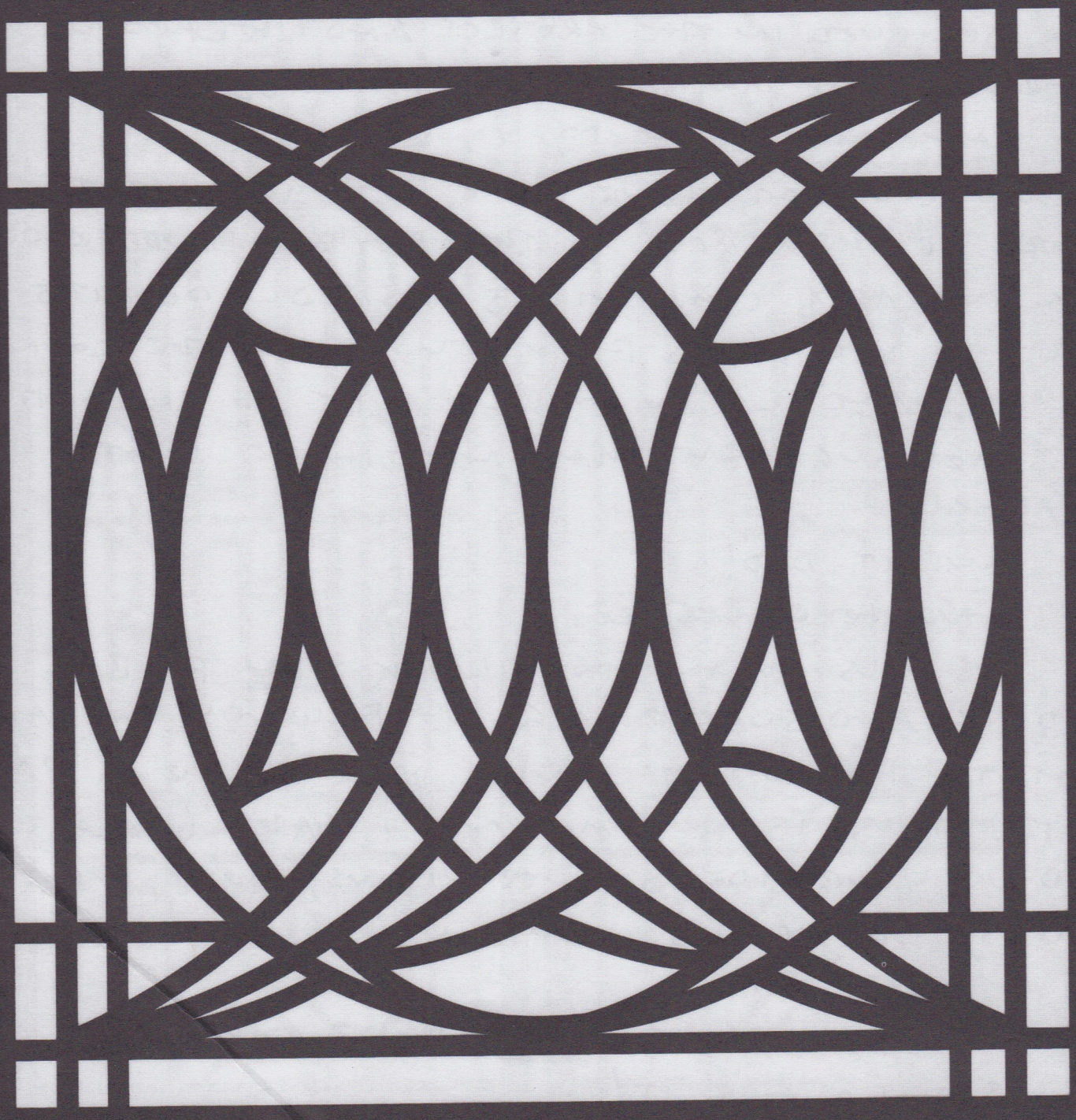
"...you can't like everything. And everybody has things they hate. So sometimes you're the thing that people hate."

- Tom Scharpling



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LUMPY AND THE DUMPERS

1. flush em
2. noxious

B

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1. dump the dumpers
2. drop some goo

No. 1

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No. 1

A

LUMPY AND THE DUMPERS

1. Plunk em
2. Noxious

B

AUSMUTEANTS

1. dump the dumpers
2. drop some goo